QUIET DAYS IN SPAIN

C. BOGUE LUFFMANN

Hoping that your days in Spain will not be too quiet

A. M.

9/16/17

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BY C. BOGUE LUFFMANN

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PREFACE

ON taking my departure after telling some true but adventurous stories to a family of eager children, a little girl said to her mother, "Wouldn't it be lovely if what he said were true!"

I am reminded of this remark as I write a preface, but I offer no excuse for the appearance of this book. It made itself; it is a faithful tale, and should it here and there read like fiction—well, so much the better.

During portions of 1908–9 I wandered over forty-two of the forty-nine provinces of Spain—I had previously made acquaintance with many of them—involving more than seven thousand miles of land travel, and taking pot-luck with all sorts of people. It would be odd had I not come by a few interesting facts. These I have endeavoured to set down; not always in the exact order in which they presented themselves, but ever with the desire to do justice to the Spaniard, his life, his country, and my own mood. The first chapter, in some way introductory, will prepare the reader for what is to follow; but in the absence of any detailed expression of

opinion on Spain as a nation a few words may be included here.

Poverty is the most painful and haunting fact of Spain.

Millions of her people go hungry throughout their lives. Gaudy pomp, religious ceremony, debasing superstition, the brags of life and hopeless, comfortless poverty are almost everywhere jumbled. Great cities live on little churches, and great churches live on little towns. All Spain is odd, and it never can be even. Then who is to blame? The modern Spaniard is blamed for his laziness. Outsiders point to what the Romans and Moors did. These were colonists, and plunderers to boot. They brought vast treasures into Spain, and when they settled down to depend on the native store they did no better than the modern Spaniard. There is not a single period in the history of Spain when she was rich or drew decent comfort out of her native store.

No British writer has written more entertainingly of Spain than George Borrow, and no man has created a more erroneous impression. "The most magnificent country in the world," he proclaimed it, which is absurd, and proves that Borrow knew but little about mother-earth. Native life he understood, but even then his imagination and ineradicable habit of exaggeration caused him to place all his subjects in a false light. Spain was great when the world was small. She could produce adventurers by the thousand

where she could not raise a score of administrators ; and the characteristic still holds good.

Of the South, the Spaniard looks that way for life. All his dreams are of the East and of the Moorish period in the West. His old romances are based almost entirely on Arabic themes ; his modern stage characters hail from Morocco ; his lover of fiction is under the spell of eyes which have captivated him in Tangier. The Moor is the " eternal enemy," and by a strange power of fascination is the most admired as he is the best hated man in the world of the Spaniards.

Some people want and even expect Spain to change and become like the rest of Europe. As if it were possible ! Rather let us be thankful for the distinctiveness of the nations, for this world will be a dull affair if the busybodies ever succeed in making it " much of a muchness."

If we are to criticise the Spaniard it is to say that he is not so idle as lacking in administrative qualities. He can often initiate where he cannot grasp and carry through a concern. His poverty has made him afraid, and a number of traits, racial or acquired, leave him incapable of looking on life and its concerns from the standpoint of other European peoples. Nevertheless, he preserves a fine soul. The Spanish countryman is a splendid fellow, as eager, industrious, clean-living and contented as any man on earth when he is given a chance to live decently.

Spaniards are charged with being cruel. Let

us rather say they are hard. They do not go about looking for the chance to do physical harm to any one. The Spanish mind is not easily understood. If we allow, as we may allow, that the British Isles hold nearly twice the population of Spain, then we may say that so far as ears, eyes, and hearts may realise, we shall easily discover ten times more misery in the British Isles, directly due to cruelty, than the same attention would reveal in Spain. The cruelties inflicted in the world are generally due to ignorance. To cite parallel cases of English and Spanish forms of cruelty would be of little value. Facts have to be accounted for, and we see in the Spaniard some justification for what he does or neglects to do, and we cannot therefore separate a case from its causes, or blame a nation for the inborn defects of its individuals.

Let it be said that the bull-fight is not a true reflex of Spanish character, any more than prize-fighting is of the English, and leave it there.

A man never strikes a woman, or at least so rarely that few can tell of witnessing such an act. In the Asturias I once saw a man box his wife's ears; and allowing for all the circumstances, I think she thoroughly deserved it.

The Spaniards display a peculiar indifference to the feelings of others. I have never seen a weakling championed, or a bad act rebuked; but this grows out of respect for individual liberty, a kind of consciousness that no one has a

right to interfere. The habit of ridicule causes much heart-pain in Spain, and it is the vice of every class. It would be almost impossible to make the best-educated Spaniard see the truth of this statement, as he regards personal criticism as one of the few spices of life. The theatre gives abundant proof of the widespread habit of "digging" at any and every one, wherever there is the slightest chance. In their heated abuse the people go beyond the bounds of truth and decency, and the opprobrium heaped upon unquestionably innocent girls by fiery mothers is as painful as it is surprising. The spontaneity of the Spanish character prevents anything like the nursing of a grudge, but the ready thrust is no less trying. My jealous hostess, seeing I admired a beautiful woman, said to me in her presence, "What do you think of her?" I could do no less than exclaim, "She is perfectly lovely!" Swift and cold as a dagger came the shaft, "She has no back teeth!"

The blight of Spain is in her system of government. Her public men aspire to be dictators, and negative every wholesome desire when it leaves no room for their personal advancement. All decrees are of a suppressive character: press censorship; no public meeting; no free education; no unions or alliances; no emigration without permit; no petitions for work nor demonstrations against rapacious authority. With the placing of Government supporters in every position of

profit, the taxation of every form of labour, product, and enterprise, no more is done than will raise revenue, fill the pockets and increase the boasts of those in office, and add to the mountain of make-believe composing the political and social system of Spain.

As a number of self-governing states owning allegiance to one monarch, Spain might do infinitely better than she does under the present system ; for there is an ineradicable vice in the form of official place-making and political corruption, due largely to the size of the country and the ease with which all offences may be hidden.

As Sancho Panza's grandmother remarked, there are the haves and the have-nots, and all Spain wants to be amongst the haves.

No remedy is in sight, for it is unthinkable that any change can come from within until the Church is virtually suppressed, free institutions are not only tolerated, but supported by the general government, and the bulk of the revenues are spent in developing the provinces wherein they are raised.

As things are, to win is to be in the right ; the average official Spaniard has no higher sense of morality.

Recent Governments have given more and more to the Church and less and less to education. The revolutionary spirit is fostered by a desire to break through the chains of ignorance and stifling superstition which weigh down, sap,

and starve the bulk of the nation. Spain is held to Europe solely by the vitalising stream of commercial people from the north, and if it were possible to reorganise and preserve her public departments by an international commission she would soon vastly improve her status and estate. But the governing and the grasping class of Spaniard is opposed to the European ideal and trend. He is the child of Europe, an ignorant, but astute, greedy, and incurably vain child.

Finally, we should not take Spain seriously, for she is never in earnest, and as a country is not worth foreign intervention. Foreign capital and investments of one kind and another keep her employed, and as the world's playground she may still be reckoned with. So vast and varied, so unknown, she will continue to lure and fascinate, even to alarm. Spain remains the great unrevealed store of the South — a part of Europe, a link with Asia, an offshoot of Africa, she leads us from people to people, from clime to clime. In race, language, and ideal, ever varying, she is one only under the impulse of religious fervour; a mother land, yet everywhere with the unformed heart of a child; a remnant of the age of mysticism; the victim of discredited institutions; a holder to faith without works; misled by an Eastern love of gauds, favours, and rewards; possessed of a fine soul, but savage by reason of the hot blood coursing through her veins. If ever

a nation was by all the laws of nature and circumstance divided against itself, it must be Spain.

Portions of "Third Class," "Seville Fair," "The Home of Romance," "A Great Shrine," and various notes used in these pages have already appeared in the *Melbourne Age*. For permission to republish them I must express my grateful thanks to Messrs. David Syme and Co.

C. B. L.

May, 1910.

AN INVITATION

COME, ye who would be straying
From toil and heart-born care,
Where orange flowers are playing
With many a maiden's hair;

Look where the sun is pointing
At noon across the sea.
Up! for your soul's anointing,
And come along with me.

A respite beg or borrow
From worldly strife and strain.
We go where toil's "to-morrow,"
The dreamy land of Spain.

There, idling for a season
Along her storied ways,
May we find peace with reason
In wealth of QUIET DAYS!

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QUIET DAYS IN SPAIN

CHAPTER I

THE BREATH OF LIFE

"One's self I sing—a simple separate person."

FROM a personal standpoint this book needs no apology. It is a plain tale of incidents and experiences in different times and places. With much to be thankful for, tribute must be offered to those patronesses of three Spanish shrines who afford special protection and blessing to vagabonds. Here thanks be given to "Our Lady of the Road" (Leon), to "Our Lady of Health" (Tajares), and to "Our Lady of Rags and Tatters" (Rio Negro). To be under the safe guardianship of these three is to make confident holiday. Once I served an apprenticeship in the rural affairs of Spain; applied the experience then gained to life in a far-off land, where I remained, a hard-worked exile, for fourteen years.

In youth I felt that the best intelligence was shown in the capacity to create work and to increase the world's food-supply, and to this joint task I bent my back and my will. Then I dis-

cerned the body to be of little account, and work criminal where it suppresses the demands of the soul. If we did our utmost to develop ourselves there would be less need to depend on others. I came to see men hate me for daring to say that poetry, beauty, and the broad face of the world are the best things to be in love with. I was in disgrace because I did not believe in work without end. For employment, recreation, and sustenance I would exhaust ruins and old cities, country-sides and their populations ; I would gladly feast and as willingly starve with them ; I would know again the unsullied snows and the fight for life on the high mountains, and the splendours of the bursting valleys. These are clean, gratifying things, conducive to pleasant days and peaceful slumbers.

Hearing the call I turned to Spain. It was April, and such an April as the South had not known for years. The winter had been wet and mild ; and all the land was splendid to the eye, though the crop was little more than weeds.

A train made haste to carry me inland by roads and mountains I had trudged in earnest youth. Broad plains of purple bugloss and crimson poppy waved a wild welcome ; a high and wide sky of flaming hues emitting a quickening heat overspread all visible things, and the voice of the South that is as wine rose to quicken and delight my heart. I was at home again, and found reason to be glad. We are all set towards some place or period in time. We understand countries we have neither

seen nor studied, where we cannot make head or tail of what is about us. I have always known and loved, even where I could not approve, Spain; perhaps she appeals because she is the land of to-morrow and holds the gospel of never mind! So long in chains, I was almost tempted to hurry; but Spain forbids haste; nothing shows more folly or vulgarity than striving to get ahead; so catching the pulse of the country I moved to its time and tune. Years ago I haunted churches, galleries and places of fame; now I was bent on more homely fare. Neither art nor history should claim much of my time. I desired to estimate Spain's native resources and to live with and know more of the everyday life of her people. As a matter of fact, I wished that some of the men and industries of Spain might find a home in and aid the development of a far-distant land; and to this extent my wanderings had a practical side.

Returning after an absence of many years, I see—more in architecture; less in painting; more in streets and windows than in domestic interiors; more in the few splendid, than in the many poverty-stricken, regions; more in the peasants than in those who form the town populations; and far more in the philosophic than in the actual concerns of Spain as a nation.

It would be odd if this work, compiled from notes made in almost every part of the vast country, did not reveal some contradictions, for

Spain is full of them. The aim has been to write provincially—to put the local fact on its ground. The references to Spain's natural resources, political and social conditions, have been compiled with every desire to do justice to the Spanish people and to inform the reader. Some important provinces and phases of Spanish life are not dealt with because they were included in the previous book, " A Vagabond in Spain."

A critic has said " A traveller should make light of his troubles." Had the same critic been for long alone he might have known that an isolated man is besieged by a passion to explain himself. The world is in no haste to read books of facts ; and seldom gets to know what a man's thoughts turn to, and how he is sustained when left to himself. He spends much of his time in looking backwards, and away at the distances ; for if he did not so he could make no comparisons ; everything that was, becomes exaggerated, dwarfed, or altered, is more drab or highly coloured. Then the manner and the time of his thoughts change—he may not be a busy Briton in a lotus land ; but instead, falls into the leisurely seductive mood begotten in the idle ways of quiet places. Wherever possible I have offered the sum of Spain's merriment to the reader ; but as Spain is not always and everywhere merry, there must be a sombre story and a little sermonising now and then.

After Seville one is glad to escape to the quiet of Cordova. I came there for the third time, but

it is so old and full of interest as to be ever new and unknown. A little girl wrote to me there, "I hope Poste Restante is a nice place, and that you are very comfortable." That was a good beginning. Once a tinsmith took an English sovereign from me; and on my return met me at the railway station with the gold piece hanging from his watch-chain and the welcome words, "Amigo—I am rejoiced to see you." It was an accident that we met; but as he embraced me he held out the gold ornament, and smiled, "I have always worn this in memory of you!" He was painfully cross-eyed; but he knew his way about Cordova, and I am indebted to him for many little discoveries and pleasant hours.

At the Fonda I was again welcomed by a fat, bow-legged, mutton-chopped waiter, who grabbed my hand and shook it heartily, saying with a broad beam of sunshine in his face, "I'm overjoyed to see you back again." I felt he was humbugging me; but it took him little time to convince me that he really remembered me. The awkward part of this was that three or four other waiters were brought along, and I was introduced as an old friend of the house! Later, I got into trouble for not holding a friendly intercourse with all these men before or after every meal. It can be nothing short of vulgar, nay, worse, it is bestial, "animal," as they say, not to see or speak familiarly with every one met. This is a nice trait, but it means a lot of useless effort.

Cordova is the sleepiest town in Spain, but for a few days I was kept busy, shaking hands and drinking café with those whom I had never hitherto spoken to but who "remembered seeing me before!" I went into a shop, and the owner at once said, "You were here years ago." Doubting his memory I said "No"; but he "Yes," and convinced me that he remembered me, though he referred to fifteen years previously! He talked for half an hour, until I asked somewhat impatiently, "Here, give me what I want and let me go?"

This hurt him, and in my embarrassment I went off forgetting my walking-stick, which has a plant spud at the end. Soon I missed it, and the moment I appeared in the doorway he called to one of the half-dozen boys who stood to one side of him, "Here, Niño, get the busy foreign gentleman his toothpick!"

Cordova is full of fun, and chiefly so, I think, because one has time to observe and to let the humour sink in. In the market a small boy with a big apron and a pompous manner was offering half a mean kid to a woman for a peseta. She objected that it was very small, and he fairly smothered her with, "Woman! do you want half a bull for tenpence!"

On a piece of waste ground outside the town were over eighty heaps of manure and litter, large and small, suitable for dressing land. This had been collected from the streets by men and boys,

who sell it to farmers and market-gardeners on their homeward journeys. On one tiny heap, a mere bucketful, was planted a card with " Cheap ! Quick ! Giving up business ! "

This reminds me of some children who, born in Cordova, were taken to America, and, returning after years, said in an ecstasy, " Oh, don't we love it all !—even the dear old smells ! "

A daily paper had this bit of news : " Nine boys playing with dynamite are friends no longer ; their pieces are not likely to be identified and obtain absolution."

At the post office I left fivepence, and calling the next day recognised the man with whom I left it ; he denied being present on the occasion ; he was, but when sure that I knew him, he fumbled in his pockets, and handing over the fivepence remarked, " My honour is worth more than fifty cents ! " Quite so ; but that was his way of putting himself in the right, for he wished me to believe that I had swindled him.

My cross-eyed friend was named Hijos de Cordova—Sons of Cordova ! To what remote period does that name date ? Whether this served as a passport I know not ; but he had no difficulty in gaining an audience with the proud Marchioness de O—— and persuading her to allow me to inspect her apartments. This lady was the wife of a great gamester, and, though she had inherited three large fortunes, was very poor, and lived by retailing the treasures of her

large old house ; a veritable museum, containing beautiful furniture, old lace and silk by the hundredweight, many rare cabinets, fine carvings, and a rich collection of fans and rosaries in all sorts of material. Unequal to purchasing any of these, I made choice of some things which were regarded as lumber—an immense tarima—an octagonal wooden device, five feet across, of carved wood ornamented with brass. This contrivance rests on the floor and supports the charcoal brazier, while the company sits round and uses the edge of the tarima as a footstool. A more interesting find was a muga—ladies' palfrey chair—in boxwood, with ivory and mother-of-pearl, the arm-rests representing two swan-necks and heads. The muga is no longer seen on the roads of Spain ; the peasantry do not employ it, and the ladies journey by private coach or train. Among the lumber were some disahumadors—incense burners used for sweetening and refreshing rooms. They are brass bowls on stands and have perforated covers. The custom was to macerate rosemary, lavender, dry roses, and other sweets of the garden and field, and, adding spices, mix these with hot ashes placed in the disahumador. The lumber-room also held broken statuary, window and door fittings containing heraldic figures and coats-of-arms. It seemed as if the Marchioness had taken and kept whatever would preserve links with the past. There were some beautiful azulejos — coloured tiles — from the celebrated

castle of Niebla, near Huelva, which, built in the thirteenth century, was declared original in every detail, and perfect in all. Here also lay several partadors—curiously shaped brass rings large as a cheese-plate ; they are still used to keep the cloth clean when the puchero or other cooking vessel is placed on the table. These, with some others, I bought ; but the pride of the Marchioness stood in the way of her taking money, and I was told, in a roundabout fashion, that I might leave it with the doorkeeper. It would be easy to moralise over this collection of objects, dead and alive ; but, after all—it is the history of the world !

One day a wizened, but pretty, old dame stood at her door polishing a small copper bowl—a diminutive puchero or pipkin ; the shape was rare, the material of fine tone, and I determined to buy it. The value was but a few pesetas ; I offered as much, and she said, " We have no bread, my man is away looking for some ; but the bowl was my mother's." This was no excuse for raising the price. It was evident she loved the thing ; but the money was a small fortune, so she took it and I went off. Later I was overtaken by a decrepit old man, who held out his hat in one hand and what I had paid for the bowl in the other. I saw the situation, for he said as plainly as possible, " Here is your money, I want my bowl." I asked " Why ? " " It is not possible that we sell it ; it was her mother's." The

duty was plain. I gave him back the bowl and let him keep the money; and felt I had had a good day.

In spite of the many beautiful things to be found in Spanish houses of the upper classes, there is nothing to correspond with the dining, drawing-room, or library of a British home. Ornaments are rarely seen, and all small and beautiful things are kept in vitrinas—glass cabinets—rinconeras—corner closets—rare old chests, and boxes on high legs. There is everywhere a craze for reflecting glasses and gold-gilding; in a small drawing-room were fifteen deeply gilt-framed mirrors, four of which were several feet in breadth and depth. There were also, besides these mirrors, twenty-two pieces of reflecting glass in furniture, so that it was impossible to find any position where one did not get side, back, and upside-down views of oneself and the rest of the company!

The most conspicuous want in Spain is domestic comfort. The houses are always dangerously cold and dank in winter; there are no fireplaces, and therefore no fires, except in charcoal braziers; and no hot bath is possible, or even a cold one, in the average house. Easy chairs and couches are only used in the best houses, cafés, and clubs. Carpets and rugs are rarely seen, and there are no books, hobbies, or personal employments to give an air of ordered thought or individuality to the home. Of social life in private houses there is nothing. One is never introduced to a person

without the Spaniard saying, "I hope I may see you at *your* house; it is in the Calle So-and-so, and always open." But should you go there he will be taken aback; and it is a thousand to one he will regard the visit as a "barbarity." What is more, he has no gift of conversation at home, and, as you may not see his wife or play with his children, the call is generally a dull failure and discomforting. I write this because I would not have the reader blind to the shortcomings of Spanish life. My concern is to make fair comparisons, for we hold very erroneous impressions of the Spaniard, his country and its concerns.

Clothes-lines are too dear for many, and much of the laundry is spread on roofs, floors, pavements, and other space available. One wonders that the garments can be perfectly clean, yet they are surprisingly so. All the clothes are laved in cold water, and but little soap is used, a powerfully caustic lye—made by immersing wood ashes in water—taking its place. The finest lady and the grandest señor have their clothes returned from the laundry without any wrapping, and the well-ironed garments are used as advertisements; boys, men, and women stop likely patrons in the street and exhibit petticoats, shirts, and other things; all showing the deepest interest in the garments and the lavanderas' work.

Cordova is the home of the torero—bullfighter. Out of the ring the torero must live quietly; and from time immemorial this old city has been his

asylum during the winter season. Half the Calle Gondomar is taken up with cafés, clubs, and ring men. Their short jacketas, and peculiar walk, generally proclaim them. Also, they shave their temples ; but many other Spaniards do this ; so to make sure it is a torero one looks at the back of the head, as the bullfighter has his hair drawn up like a woman to form a pigtail, which is braided and pinned on his crown.

The stranger is surprised at the toreros' quietness, the absence of noise and display. You realise the truth of what the people of Verona said of Dante, " the man who has been in hell."

The bullfighter saves his smiles for the ring. In private life he is the steadiest and most silent of men. Night after night I have sat with them in clubs and cafés to hear only the most conventional talk. One night, I remember, eleven prominent fighters sat together for over four hours ; they drank coffee, and smoked puras—cigars—incessantly. Now and then, one would speak and be eloquent with gesture, but the others would turn their heads, in a sign of indifference, and quiet would return.

I grow to like the Spaniard for saying, " To-morrow will be soon enough." To-day he would live. Every day he " takes the sun." That is the mode of the South—not to take the air, but the sun. The Spaniard fears air as if it were a pestilence, as it is in some of the narrow winding streets and deep-set windowless rooms.

Idling through a long afternoon on a seat in the Gran Capitan, I watched the crowd go to and fro. There were hundreds of lovely eyes, but only one pair of fresh pink cheeks. The dark rooms, and the general use of the shawl over the head, keep the skin very white ; and this is intensified by the use of rice powder. Hats are supplanting mantillas ; the mantilla may soon be a thing of the past ; few young women wear it, excepting at Mass and during seasons of merriment. The southern walk is always alluring. One sees every woman's petticoat, but never an ankle, for they are wonderfully deft and circumspect in holding their skirts, and when sitting never cross the feet. These southern Spaniards—the business folk of all grades—take their wives and children for walks every afternoon, and leave their shops and concerns to the care of others ; where no others exist the shop is closed that the day may yield some satisfying leisure. This may not be " good business," but it is more rational and less gluttonous than that of " enterprising " people. In this old city are great open spaces, parks, drives, and promenades where thousands of people strut, stroll, and rest every day in the year. We Anglo-Saxons often seem ashamed to rest, and it is positively dangerous to admit that we do not believe in work if it burdens and stifles us. The Spaniards of the towns are incapable of slavery to the loss of self. Their lives are narrow and simple, but are not painful. Aspiring less they

do not complain as we do ; their ignorance does not make them afraid ; whilst their sense of history imposes a philosophic calm.

If men feared not poverty and the misfortunes they imagine money will keep away, we should hear little of the cant of " getting on." There may be neither wisdom nor happiness in doing nothing and caring less, but surely there is a middle course —a way by which we may earn our independence and find time to enjoy life. I used to be impatient of the slow-coach ; now I am impatient of those who are rushing to get ahead. Greed is the ugliest, as it is the most pitiful, thing on the face of the earth ; and greed and ignorance are brothers. The business side of Spanish life is full of interest ; one finds much to admire in it.

A singular contrivance in the high towers takes the place of bells on Good Friday ; this is the " mattraca "—three long boxes of heavy wood arranged round a spindle, with several roughly fashioned hammers with rings in their handles, through which a rod is run to keep them in place. At short intervals during the whole of Good Friday the mattraca is turned round, grindstone fashion, and creates a most awful din. The hammers are laws unto themselves, and fall anyhow on the boxes, according to their inclination and the rate at which the spindle is turned. It is always risky to guess at origins ; but as I can find no clue to the origin of the mattraca, I fall back on the belief that it was intended to inform the

multitude of the building of, or nailing of Christ to, the cross.

To know cities I walk round them, and next ascend their highest towers. Conscious that I can never know Cordova thoroughly, I often climbed to the Cathedral tower, which stands independent of the Mosque—across a wide orange-planted patio —where I could survey the city below ; the river and the valley ; the cultivated uplands and the wild Sierras—a world complete and rich with the story of two thousand years. It is strange that we see time's story more clearly in some lands than in others. Few can picture life in the British Islands two thousand years ago ; but it is easy to see over twice that time in the lands around the Mediterranean. The South is our cradle—we had not our birth in Britain ; we evolved nothing there ; the organised concerns came to us ; we are nearer to the home of Lucan and Seneca than to the tumulus which may be that of Boadicea on Primrose Hill.

As I never could look on a hill without wishing to see the prospect on the other side, Cordova's tower led me to explore the country in all directions round. When looked down upon, the city is the colour of curry powder—a soft yellow, mingled with grey and white. The roofs are composed of pale red tiles with a yellowish brown lichen feeding upon them, and the city dust and whitewash mingle to produce an unvarying tone. The oleander, arbutus, gumcistus, rosemary, and

lavender, cover vast areas, and in their season make the mountains and valleys beautiful. Most lovely of all are the purple and violet bugloss, the corn-poppy and cornflower, the purple pea, the iris olata, and a yellow cowslip-like flower whose name I have forgotten. In Spain one sees to a great distance; for not only are the view points high, but the light is strong and the atmosphere dry and clear. To take to the hills in spring and look upon the world round Cordova is to know something of the joy of life.

Early one morning I went to some high ground on the Seville road, there to gather plants of iris olata. The sun shone bright and warm, and the bag filled; I ate a crust and sat down to admire the immense page of beautiful life that lay open before me. Then I slept, and was aroused by a pack of twenty-five lean lurcher dogs. They were all coupled, save one, and controlled by a man dressed in leather who had a rude horn slung at the shoulder and was seated on a long-tailed white barb. The dogs were a landowner's rabbit pack out for exercise. After exchanging the time of the day with the huntsman, and receiving a most inquisitive sniffing from his dogs, I was left to myself for the remainder of the day. But those dogs and their primitive keeper gave wings to my imagination. I studied the great landscape again and again—as millions before me had done. I saw Cordova spreading over what are now fallow and hunting fields, debris, and the refuse

left by the great ancient city. Full in view was the site of Medina Azzahra, that wonderful palace which Abdulraman the Third built for his slave wife, the mother of the warrior Almanzor. To-day no man knoweth for a surety where that palace stood; but it is believed to have been about four miles distant from the present Cordova, on a natural terrace at the foot of the Sierra Morena. The great convent of San Geronimo (1405), built from the coarser remains of the palace, is in its turn in a state of ruin.

Following the river the eye caught the once famous castle of Almodovar, and further on were watch-towers, villages, and towns, heaps of masonry, lines where roads had run, aqueducts, vestiges of bridges and pillars, marking the way to the great river. Further off stood the city; but so hoary as to show no signs of life.

I sat and mused quietly, happy in the reflection that time, if it make ruin of all things, brings us also to a sense of peace. Once or twice I felt guilty of idling—felt I must be up and off and busy; but I checked myself as I said aloud, "Shall I not dare to lie at ease upon the grass, to be warmed by the sun, to smell the odours of clean earth and pungent weed; may I not read my history here, and for a time rest unconcerned? What need to care about news and the business of the world? Here is enough, for I can dream, and ponder over the past." I protest because we have no paper called "The Past." If there were such

a blessed organ, I verily believe I could summon energy enough to read it regularly—but that word "regularly" is to me the most scaring in the dictionary! Nothing scares me like the thought of having to do anything regularly. Ugh!

Soothed and made strong by the lessons of the day, I passed the evening in a café where the three or four hundred men present were interested, for an hour or two, by the curiosity of a *box of wooden matches* of English manufacture! These are the children of Europe, and that is why one rests with them.

The garden of the British Consul is somewhere about two thousand years old! It is in the heart of early Roman Cordova, and has been occupied in succession by Roman, Goth, Moor, and Spaniard. The site would suggest human dwellings from the beginnings of civilisation, for it is on gently rising ground, safe from, yet near to, the river. This old garden is surrounded by walls as high as three-storeyed houses; parts of it are said to be Roman. I pruned the roses and the vines, and did some digging, and grew to be happy there. I wished to remain, cloistered and confined; a glad prisoner among scented flowers; the vine, the orange, and lemon; breadths of blue and white violets; heliotrope that climbed to the second-storey windows, and the babbling of water-brooks which ran by the brick-bordered paths and beds. Only the past has a true voice. I idle that I may hear, and

close my eyes that I may see the many-coloured pageant of Time.

When I had worked myself out of a job in the garden, the Consul came home, and with him, his world. We fell to talking of living in the day and looking back—my way—as against "working to save" for the future (as if one could do anything of the kind), and getting forward, as he affects to persuade himself he does. Yet I notice that he feels weighed with the cares of life more than I. This may mean he has a higher moral sense; but perhaps it does not. Still, he cannot alter his nature; nor can I. Anyhow, I pruned the roses, tied the weak ones to upright lines to aid their flow of sap, and felt I had done a little to revive waning life in Cordova's ancient bones.

CHAPTER II

THIRD CLASS

TAKE the first-class for comfort, the second for dullness, the third for company; and one is not likely to go wrong in Spain. To get more animal heat, save money and know the delights of good company, I travelled third. The morning was intensely cold when we set out from Ronda to Malaga, snow capping the heights and hoar-frost spangling the banks and timber wall of the railway station. Here, as in Ireland, most of the officials are employed in ringing bells and blowing whistles, and yet many who intend to travel lose the train, for there's a nasty habit of ending the clanging and screeching five or ten minutes before starting time, and then allowing the train to steal out of the station quietly, like a thief in the night ; and one can only imagine what trouble and choice Spanish is caused thereby. Our train was a particularly stealthy brute, and fairly winked at its own cleverness in leaving some poor wretch in the lurch at almost every stopping place. But back to the thirds.

We are seventy-two in number, in an open carriage of six divisions.

To keep us in order there are two military police, two carabineers, or armed road guards, and two other soldier-like policemen with three harmless-looking prisoners. There are also five or six soldiers in uniform, and as many more wearing—that was all their uniform—forage caps—presumably these are recruits. The rest of the company is made up of small business men, farmers, and market women, the latter with overflowing baskets as big as themselves. Then there are boys going from home for the first time, and looking very sad as the familiar landscape fades away. There are quite a number of young women, too, for Malaga is a large city, and servants claim higher wages there than in the country. The girls are all in black—plain in style as the garments of a nun, though they wear fine scarfs or shawls about their shoulders, and have their hair beautifully dressed with flowers, ribbons, or lace. The Spanish women are born coiffeuses, and hold their heads with such pride as to make the plainest face amongst them in some way attractive. A girl near us is a real Southern beauty of twenty. She was married but six months ago, is now a widow, and is going into service for a home and one dollar a month. Three shillings and fourpence—no more and no less. Little as she may know of the ways of English housekeeping, she is so beautifully clean, fresh, and strong, and has such a sweet, honest face, that she would prove a godsend to the average British household. This girl talked with

a neighbour ; the others sat quiet and were disregarded by the men, for it is contrary to custom and most improper for a man to enter into conversation with, or take the slightest notice of, a girl when she is alone. The woman of Spain is influenced by the Moorish occupation, which extended over nearly 800 years. Where the Moor did not settle, the Spanish woman is a Latin in the creed of custom ; but in the ancient stronghold of the Moor she is often found to be as Moorish as the woman of Morocco. All the elderly women wear black handkerchiefs over their heads, and cover their noses with black shawls as Moorish women do theirs with white. Spanish women are mistresses of the needle, and few nations equal them in the art of fine sewing. Hence one can study embroideries and laces, dainty collars, babies' caps and shoes, as well as the flowered waistcoats and fancy shirt fronts of the men. It is all very charming and true to one's dream of the peasant and the life which begins and ends in quiet labour.

The first part of the country is very poor, and one literally shivers when looking on its churlish slopes and half-impotent valleys, and realises the splendid courage that keeps the people true to their land and the labour which yields so little return. Of all there is to see in rural Spain, nothing charms one more than the faces of the peasant-folk, more especially of the elderly men. They are nearly all Lord Thurlows—they look so profoundly wise.

The Spanish peasant is always clean shaven—at any rate, he gets a clean shave now and then. Meet a company of country Spaniards passing into a town, and they look like so many stage brigands. Meet them returning, and they appear as so many pleasant-faced human sheep. They are shaved and clean again.

This same sheepish peasant has a mother wit of great swiftness and charm. He never states the simple fact, since he is always equal to a fine figure of speech. Even his boasting is splendid; he does it with such cool conviction that you are bound to believe him. Always a simple soul, he has high courage, and is, I verily believe, the peasant gentleman of Europe. He is profoundly respectful to all tradition and custom, and shows his real nature by the way he resents any offence against his country. Having acquired the fine art of starving gracefully, he must needs be thin, with a clear eye, and alert for the chance of assisting in the concerns of his neighbour; neglect of social duty being the crime he ranks highest.

Of words he is without end; but as they are either musical or eloquent of meaning the more he talks the better one is pleased.

The conversation in the third-class carriage was almost entirely of money—or the want of it, bargains, and lack of work and bread, for the land is very poor and the people in a chronic state of want. It is a stock saying in Spain (goodness knows how old) that "the first element is bread"

—one hears the word "pan" twenty times to that of any other. Where friends recognised each other or joined or left the train, there was always much to please, and the soul warmed to the words of parting—"Always felicity," and "Be you with God until we meet again." For economy those who could afford a bite had brought it with them. One man, much better off than the others, had a baked kid, and so we broke the Levitical law, as we ate it in its mother's milk. Another man had a small skin-sack of wine; so we again happily broke the law, this time of Mahomet. In spite of these and other offences, the train kept to the rails, and we travelled on. A mother, with several children, had boiled eggs for their sustenance. The eggs seemed of no account, as compared with the shells, which they stuck on their noses, that they might look beautiful or terrifying. Poorer folk ate acorns, raw or roasted, also lupin seed, the turnip-like stump of the native palm, and other odds and ends in great variety.

Spaniards are good-natured, and never eat, drink, or smoke without offering the lion's share to the stranger and friend alike. It is polite and customary to refuse till hard pressed, but the stranger is expected to accept, and so we sampled a good deal of stuff, good, bad, and indifferent. In spite of this, at a change-station restaurant we got a six-course meal of deliciously cooked food and clean, sound wine, all for about 1s. 4d. in English money. I mention this because the Spaniards have

before all others the art of serving a meal. In England, unless one goes to a distinctly expensive place, the aim seems to be to put as complete a meal as possible on one or two plates. In Spain a meal is a present joy and a help over the remainder of the road. Of course, we smelt garlic ; simply smelt or scented it—that's the word. One should not know that one scents or tastes garlic ; then it is a most appetising and comforting factor in a meal. Our only real grievance is roused by the railway bell and the shrieking whistle. This intolerable combination of noises began almost the moment we sat down to dine, and did not end till after the first course was disposed of. We got up a row between the waiter and some of the band so as to save our own time for the business of eating and drinking ; but as all the performers could play and talk at the same time, we were not comforted much. Then the crowd took sides ; some said the train would, and some that it wouldn't, go without us. Anyhow, we caught it, and a good many words in the vernacular of the province.

More than half our journey of 150 miles lay through tunnels and across bridges, spanning splendid chasms, in wild and absolutely sterile mountains. Here and there a torrent leapt or fell and boiled, passing on with any particles of soil its churning may have made, and never depositing a grain which might be seized and husbanded by the peasant. Then we passed into a stronger light, and where the sun shone warm, and there were

wide, roaming purple hills dotted with pure white cots and little squares, or irregular windings of green olive and orange trees, growing wherever sufficient soil and moisture might be found. The train itself seemed glad to escape from the eternally bare and blighted hills, and rattled on at a great pace, fairly preening itself in the green warm light which bathed the land of the orange and the vine. Then once more we shot into hills, and climbed and panted and choked in the tunnels, and on coming forth again saw long winding valleys and men far below, no larger than ants—and, like them, busy—scratching at their mother earth. Our final run was through a valley near the coast, where oranges filled the railway platforms, and boys and girls sat in rows packing the fruit into cases. Six a penny, and very large and sweet. This woke the desires of most of us, and the whole company reeked of orange, even to the exclusion of tobacco smoke, which is saying a good deal.

The houses are pretty and homelike now, for the land is generous, and beautiful too. Everybody seems a good deal richer and happier, and boasting increases, as if all in sight were ours, and life a perpetual journey and holiday. Ten miles from our destination the women began to get their parcels ready. Then the landscape faded, for we were all self-centred and concerned for the uncertain life ahead. Unused to train travel, nearly all the men stood up, and so filled the carriage that it was dark, stuffy, and horrible. By and by we

smelt the air of the ocean, saw masts and sails, and a moment later the wide blue plain of the sea—that *Camino eternal,* which is an everlastingly open road and way of hope for us all.

CHAPTER III

A WINTER IN THE HILLS

TO gain a knowledge of the conditions of life and the nature of some rural industries in this locality, I passed a winter in the hills between Malaga and Granada. The country ran up to several thousand feet ; and the estate farmed lay exposed to the snows and raw cold of the Sierra Nevada. Our house occupied a gap in the ranges whence we looked over numberless hills, deep gorges, isolated houses, the mighty Sierras, and in clear weather we could see the Mediterranean, with its African shore sixty miles away. The industry of the region consisted of cultivating wine grapes, the growing of olives, of evergreen oak for timber and charcoal, and the cultivation of a few vegetable crops for local consumption. Estates of this character employ few regular hands. It is the custom to engage a large number of men to perform a seasonable operation, and then to discharge them till they are wanted for the harvest. In Spain rural employment does not run to more than seven months in the year ; the rest of the time is a terrible fight for the workers to keep body and soul together. Over a hundred and

fifty men were brought together on the Pineda estate. Where they came from seemed a mystery, for looking out on the land it appeared almost destitute of life; but tucked away between the hills were villages. It was the gente, or village people, of these little communities who formed the labour supply. The great majority of the men came in rags; their bodies lean. They looked hungry and wore a hunted look, which made one almost afraid of them. But they were good at heart; their only failing was an unconquerable hatred for those whom they thought favoured by an additional week's work or an extra penny a day.

It was the custom to engage men in groups. Each gente as it came along would elect its spokesman, with whom the manager dealt, sorting and sizing-up the group and offering a price for each man's labour according to what he judged he was worth. Most of the men had been cold and hungry for months, and were so weak as to be incapable at the beginning of doing a good day's work. Hence it became necessary to feed them well and work them lightly for the first week or two. The food consisted of fat bacon, cod-fish, olive oil, chick-peas, rice, and potatoes, boiled into a slushy soup. There was also bread, black figs, dried plums, and a few other odds and ends of a filling if not a fattening character. At six, or long before daylight, the men would rise from the sheds where they lay all night in their clothes, and covered

with no more than a single blanket or plaited string-rug, and without any sort of wash, would each take a piece of bread and a handful of black figs, and proceed to the work of the day. This consisted of cleaning and pruning vines, and covering the roots where the soil had been washed away by the force of storm-water. Other groups pruned trees, tying the wood into pack-bundles, whilst the inferior timber and brushwood were converted into charcoal.

By the aid of these men over thirteen hundred acres of land were cleaned and cultivated during the winter. Not a single animal was employed by us, except to carry food and water to the labourers and to bring back timber or charcoal. All this hand labour was a necessity, for the country was so steep it was impossible to employ a plough or any other draught implement. To get much work done the groups from the various villages were placed side by side. This led to their racing, and trying to outdo each other—a habit which the Capataz — overseer — approved, but which developed much bad blood and a good deal of strife. In fact, the danger of riñas—rows—was so great that a number of rural guards were employed with guns to stand over the men. The morning would see every group friendly with the others ; but as the day wore on and six men of one group would fail to keep in line with six of another, or where two groups were of equal numbers, one often composed of the young men and lusty, passed the

other, consisting of enfeebled or less capable workers, blood and temper would boil. I noticed that the crookedness of the human line across the hill-side varied in proportion to the amount of anger and jealousy abroad. I used to sit and calculate where the onslaught would come from, when I saw there were obvious signs. Sometimes those who were lagging would start a song, and show great courage in singing, though they failed in physical strength. But more often the leading men would start the singing, and at times one of these would drop out and, standing erect, sing a song in praise of his village. The comparison was usually of rats and mice, or mules and donkeys: thus:

"In my village we are rats, astute and strong;
In other pueblos only weak mice are to be found";

or,

"If you would have your cargo carried straight home,
The mules and men of my pueblo can see it done";

or,

"I heard of a village where all the mules are donkeys,
And when the load slips the men are not strong enough to put it straight again!"

These couplets and snatches, sung with great glee and well-directed expression, would send the blood of the losing gentes to boiling-point. Language is not necessary to the Spaniard; with his elbow alone he can communicate with fidelity every thought and emotion. There would be a looking along the lines; tools would strike the ground or grip the vine as if with bitter hate;

hats would be tipped back from foreheads ; handkerchiefs retied on the head ; spitting would become violent ; the men would chew rather than smoke their cigarettes. Then with a " Come men," from one who could no longer endure the strain, a group would rise like locusts and fly at the antagonists. The tools became weapons—the mattock-like spade—an immense hoe with a heavy ring—and the pruning-knife—a hatchet, sickle and sword in one,—a truly dreadful weapon ! Whatever was in the hand was good enough to do some damage with.

We had no serious fights during the whole winter, but never a day went by without some display of force and fury and appeal for fair play. A year or two previously no fewer than four men had been killed in feudal fights on the estate. A common source of jealousy lay in the selection of the branch overseers, for nearly every group claimed to be made up of men born to direct the labours of others. As only a few foremen were needed, the favoured gentes were the best hated and most maligned. In selecting foremen we heard rare tales of personal ability. The custom was to select men for their swearing capacity ; for if a man could not raise the saints or possessed a splendid private vocabulary of epithets and ugly expressions, he was distinctly unfitted for the duties of a Capataz. For the fun of the thing, when we had listened to a man's account of himself, we would say discouragingly, " But you are no good at

abuse." At this he would jump back, as far as his legs and his indignation would carry him ; and lifting his rag of a hat or handkerchief, make a bow that was full of denial, obeisance, and appeal. " Señor," he would inquire, " have you heard me ? Is there anyone who has not heard me ? Am I not known as the word-slinger ? My God, I am ! " Then, " Stop, señor ; listen ! " And no doubt we had to ! Of course, it is impossible to give any idea of the epithets and the string of abuse such a master in the art would pour out upon an imaginary group of lazy rascals working under his direction. And sometimes he would praise us without a blush, telling the men we were the best employers, generous with food and pay, had the kindest hearts, even lost money in our desire to support those who had not the sense to know when they were well off. No matter wherever else we failed in our judgment, we were generally safe in choosing men who could swear well. But this does not shock much in Spain, where everybody swears, and not always quietly ; the swear-words are ugly, cruel, often quite terrifying, only that repetition through familiarising softens them, and it is only when out of Spain that one realises its full significance.

When the men had become fairly sleek and lusty, they would petition for a reduced ration. This was in measured quantities of flour, peas, rice, bacon-fat, and other articles allowed per man or group. The petitioners would ask that they

might be put on three-quarter or half rations, and some as low as quarter rations, where the full ration was barely sufficient to sustain. Their object was to save and take home unused rations.

There is no Sunday in the country parts of Spain, no fixed hours of labour or anything like a full-stop to it. People work when they can or must ; hence a young man will work from twenty-five to thirty days on end, and then rest for two or three days. An older man may work for a fortnight or three weeks ; quite an old man will take a rest once a week. But on our estate we paid off every third week. The wages ran from one to two reals a day—that is twopence to fourpence—in addition to the rough food and shelter ; but there were always some men who worked for nothing, for when we could employ no more they would say, " I will stay for food only." Even this was refused them, but sometimes they could not be turned away. One man was a most extraordinary character. He was mad ; but his was the madness that keeps others to reason. He was the biggest, liveliest, and most awesome person in all the world, I believe. He was about thirty years of age, nearly seven feet in height, very straight-limbed, and had unusually long arms. He did not shave, but clipped his beard into a black stubble. His garments were nothing but rags. A rag bound his hair into a shock ; a sheepskin apron was split and tied round each leg to as low as the knee. In the wildest weather,

and it was always perishing, he wore no coat, and his tattered shirt had no sleeves below his muscles. His feet and ankles were swathed in rags and leather straps ; and the dirt caked over him would probably have weighed more than the entire material of his garments. He came repeatedly before I told him he might stay for a meal or two.

In front of the house, beyond a ravine, there was a high promontory, planted with vines, and an escarpment fully five hundred feet deep. A track passed from its base, and it was customary for the prunings of the vines to be thrown from the cliff into the valley, and thence brought home by pack-mules. I put my giant madman to gather and tie the prunings into bundles ; and, knowing how Spaniards detest working alone, I thought that he, mad as he was, would soon tire of solitude and clear off. Not a bit of it ! He had a wonderful liking for work, and disregarded the groups of men on the hill-sides. A pay-day came, but he did not appear. He seemed afraid to come in, lest he should be cleared off with the rest. From the house I could see him working like a slave, running at each necessary piece of pruning as if it were alive and would escape him ; tucking it with fury under his great long arm, then twisting a binder round each bundle when it was complete, and hurrying to the edge of the cliff. Here he would raise it high above his head ; and, with a mighty thrust, fling it clear of the

rocks, and bend over to watch it fall light as a leaf into the valley below. Words give no idea of the strength of the picture or the emotions roused by the behaviour of that man. First of all, the reader should know something of Spanish gesture ; he should know what a poor Spaniard feels when he is giving and not asking ; he should know something of that reason which is madness, and of that madness which is reason. I knew my man sufficiently well to imagine his face as he stood out there on the edge of the cliff. He had wonderful eyes, and all his face was full of expression. If mad within, he was eloquent without. I felt I knew his thoughts and feelings, and grew to be as fascinated by him as he was concerned for himself. Yet he did not count. The work and his strength were the only things that mattered. He seemed mad only in his impatience to show that he was neither mad nor incompetent. He could work, he would work, and he did work. He was out before day, never home before dark ; there was for him no wet day, no snowy day, no Sunday. Time after time he had to scratch through the snow for his prunings ; he piled a heap of stones at a point of the cliff, so that he might reach it in safety when it was snow-capped and uncertain, and throw from there his bundles into space ! Pay-day came, and another three or more ; but he never appeared. At times I confronted him, and gave him a cigarette ; a shrug of the shoulders was his thanks. When the prunings were gathered

I felt I must keep him to other work on the ridge. So I hinted that he might collect the loose stones and make little supporting walls under vines, which were liable to be denuded of soil. His joy at finding his work recognised was beautiful to see ; and though he never changed in his attitude, all his words, which were few, and his gestures, which were many, comprised a great boast of his power to work. Whenever he shook his head as a display of ability and strength I knew he was right, to the extent that I trembled. From his great height he would send a sweeping glance down his ragged front, put out a foot, and with a huge hand smite his chest, as if to say, " Is all this mighty frame to go for nothing ? " and there was a look of contempt for the mere mice of men whose claims were always recognised. He was as one dumb, yet possessed of a great truth which must be spoken. I became enthralled by him. I did not want to understand any more of him, or to compare him with other saner men ; I was content with this wonderful animal, for such he was : there was no trace of cunning, meanness, or deception about him. He worked for four solid months out on that ridge, often in the bitterest weather ; alone, unfriended, and unpaid. One morning he was told to come in ; there was no more work, and he must go home. He bowed with the dignity of an ambassador, and said by a sign, " It is your will." I intended paying him as much as the others, but was called away,

and returning, found him gone! He had kept his word, had worked for pan solo—for bread only—and was satisfied. But I was not content to let him go on those terms. I sent down to the pueblo, where he had a crooning old mother, and asked him to come back. Then I gave him money, food, and a matchbox full of tobacco. He was not overcome, for he was unalterable. His madness was complete in so far that it left him incapable of varying his emotions. But when he had gone Pineda lost much of its charm for me. I used often to look from my window, or from the verandah, at all hours, but in vain; not again could I see that great rugged statue of a man with his arms outstretched towards the bundles of faggots as he hurled them over the edge of the cliff.

When we decided to pay off we would send word to Malaga and a cavalcade would set out with the bullion. Two, sometimes four, mounted police would be chosen; there would be a cashier and his assistant, also mounted. The four or six men would guard a pack-mule laden with the cash. The money, all in copper, was worth about forty pounds sterling; but judging by the faces of the party, the display of guns, revolvers, and other weapons, one might think the guard was in charge of the Royal jewels of Spain, or of some far richer country. On arriving, the money would be put in a strong-room, and the premises fortified against attack. This was nothing more than the survival

of custom, for there was nothing to fear from brigands or from our own men.

Owing to the enormous number of copper coins to be counted and tested—for there is a great deal of bad money in Spain—it took from early morning to long past noon to pay out those forty pounds. We had three rooms in a row ; in the centre one were the money and the clerks. The doorway on one side showed a room full of men waiting to be paid ; in the doorway on the other side was a huge stone which might have told a long story. It was shaped something like a cottage loaf and stood more than a foot high. The top was hollowed partly by nature, partly by the beating it got. Two men stood on either side of this stone, and on a labourer receiving a hat full of coppers he would go straight to the stone, with all eyes watching him to see he did not make any exchange of the coins. At the stone he would start testing his money, casting down every coin with such force as to cause it to rebound into his hand, when if good he would toss it into another hat held to accommodate him. This beating of the stone was incessant, for as Spanish money runs down to the tenth of a penny, the number of coins tested ran to many thousands. Some men were clever palmists, and would bring along bad coins and substitute them for good ones. We often found it necessary to strip men to detect fraud. One man had his arm smeared with wax into which the coins would sink and stick quite easily. This paying

business was most fatiguing, and at the same time genuinely amusing, though the humorous points were sometimes too fine or too coarse to bear telling. When all had been paid they would form into groups and collect what rations were due to them from the kitchen. Numberless little leather bags, bottles, and baskets of esparto-grass, would be drawn forth, and the various amounts of oil, rice, fat, and other food-stuffs poured into them. Then marching parties would be formed, for in their superstitious fear they were afraid to go alone with such a burden of riches about them. Their politeness and good feeling was touching. Never shy, the Spaniard is always equal to expressing himself well; and as we stood by the verandah, or at the corner of the house whence ran the mountain-path, man after man would come forward and lifting his hat and voice at the same time would call out, "Caballero!" and then turning to his comrades, "This is the noble señor. This is the gentleman we have had pleasure in working for. This is the real soul of Spain. This is the time of the sun. These are the good days. We have all been happy here. We have all been well treated here. We are always glad to come here! We wish for a good harvest here! Good health here! Good life here! Is it not so, gentlemen?" "Yes! Yes! it is so!" they would exclaim, breaking into further praise, salute, and so away. As they journeyed down the first steep mountain-path they would become more or less

detached and burst into hearty song, and this for those of us who remained was the happiest time of all. It was so gladdening to reflect on all the homes that would be cheered that night by the contents of those little sacks and baskets, hats, handkerchiefs, and pockets. Half a mile or so below, where the men looked small as children, were three or four divergent paths ; there they would gather to make up their private differences, shake hands, wish each other God-speed and depart their several ways. Then the voices would be heard in a different key, for the slopes and ravines produced very hollow sounds, some of which would come up long after the men were out of sight. To tell the truth, I was always very sad at the close of those pay-days ; there was nothing hopeful in any of them for the men whose lives depended on the little we had to offer. From youths to old men they were all as slaves ; and though skilful in their work, there was no chance of bettering their lot. So in spite of an instructive and in some ways a restful time, I was glad when the winter was over to leave Pineda in the hills and share the more genial life of the toilers in a distant valley.

CHAPTER IV

MARIA THE MIRTH-MAKER

I PASSED a summer on the Vega of Malaga. Some friends would have kept me in their large house, where were many servants, and advantages would have attended me; but as I desired to be alone or amongst the more primitive Spaniards, I took up my quarters in a misrario—penance-chamber—the last remaining portion of an old Bernardine monastery standing among the hills of Cabello. Two or three rooms had been added to the place that it might accommodate a rural guard. I arranged with an old woman to keep house for me at nine pesetas fifty, a week—about six-and-eightpence—and for this I was to get bread and goat's milk in the early morning, a breakfast of three plates at ten, and a dinner of four plates at six. There were also to be wine and coffee, and not less than a real was to be spent in meat every day. A few bits of furniture and some flesh-pots were hired, and we started to keep house. Not over-impressed by Maria's personal appearance and sense of order, I insisted on everything being kept faultlessly clean and straight, and strictly forbade her to interfere with my

writing materials. So anxious was she, at first, to please, that she regularly cleared off my blotting paper if it showed the smallest spot, a most exasperating experience, as it was very dear and difficult to obtain at that time, black sand being the only blotter in that part of Spain. Maria was a great gossip, and, unable to get any local news from me, she would go every morning to a spring, there to wash the pots and pans with wisps of esparto-grass and sand, clean and prepare the vegetables, and wait for the butcher. This worthy would appear sitting on the end of a Jack donkey, with his bare feet kicking at the animal between the long bags of meat which hung from its sides. When Maria had got all the news from him, and he had extracted from her the eccentricities of the foreign señor, she would dive into one of his meat bags for handfuls of the little bits of lean goat or veal. In Spain animals are not jointed, but as many of the slaughterers as can manage it, get round the carcase, and literally pick the flesh from the bones, putting the lean in one heap and the fat and gristle in another. As a matter of fact, there is never any fat, but a certain amount of skinny tissue, cartilage, and rough matter, which is the portion of the poor. We were rich in those days, and ate a real's worth of lean meat every day. After Maria had mauled, pulled about, and carefully examined scores of little pieces of meat, she would decide on two or three, shove them in her pocket, shoulder the pans and vegetables, tell the

butcher to "Go with God," and clamber up the rocky path and into my room. There she would regale me with the news of the day, and rolling from side to side on the little stool would exclaim, "What on earth am I sitting on?" and then, clapping her hand down, "Lord, it's our meat!" I would shoo her out, and insist on its never being put in her pocket again, but it made no difference. Whatever vicissitudes the meat may have passed through before it left the butcher, it got a rough time afterwards, for Maria insisted on the carne needing air. She would hang it on a nail in the wall, and as it was hot weather and there were any number of flies about, the stuff was filthy by the time she took it down to dress it for the table. Sometimes I would abuse her and ask why she had been so long at the spring with the butcher, but she always got out of it by saying, "I was telling him about you"; and when I inquired what she could possibly say about me, she would laugh out defiantly, "I was amusing him with your foolishness of yesterday." In self-defence I must explain that everything I did, which was new to Maria, was tontoria, or absurdity.

When the meat was taken down from the wall, Maria would wash it in vinegar and salt, until every bit became steel-blue with terror; then she would start to beat, stretch, and roll each piece, until it was almost as thin as a sausage-skin, and became a fritter, a kind of brown-paper pancake, impregnated with most mysterious and appetis-

ing flavours and odours. It would be dipped in oil, in capsicum juice, after that in a kind of tomato sauce, once more in bruised almond and garlic ; and lastly would be smeared with the butter-like paste of boiled egg-plant. None of these things, however, added to the substance or size of the piece of meat. It could be put in the mouth easily if first rolled up, though in Spain one is supposed to eat a crumb at a time, offering thanks to God between each morsel. In fact, nothing brings out the reverential spirit or such hardy boasting as the consumption of meat. It is not at all uncommon to meet adults among the peasants who have never tasted meat excepting bacon, the chorizo, or a wild bird.

Another of Maria's favourite dishes was the bolsillo—little purse. This she would make from a mere film of meat filled with minced and very delicately-flavoured vegetables mixed with yerba buena—good herbs—selected by herself in the Campo. This would be gathered into a kind of Granny purse, deftly skewered and dropped into boiling oil. Another of Maria's dishes, and the most deceptive of all, was the berza—a mixture of chopped meat and vegetables made into a rich brown stew, and so cunningly manipulated that it was almost impossible to tell one ingredient from the other. Maria was very proud of this.

She was married; Don Luis, her husband, a tall, gaunt old man, was nearly blind. He got his living by plaiting esparto-grass and sack-making

on a large lagar, or farm, ten to twelve miles away. Every few days he would come home for a rest, and when he was expected I usually gave Maria an extra penny or two for meat and an additional bottle of wine. Don Luis, though very thin and with painfully weak eyes, remained a fine-looking and attractive man, but as a true Spaniard he must needs be a great boaster. I often waited his coming before commencing the evening meal ; but out of an innate politeness and respect he never would sit down with me, but would lean against the door and descant on the inexhaustible riches and luxury of life in Spain, turning every now and then to inquire if I did not approve his remark. When the time came for him to have his supper, Maria would seat him on a stool, place another with the dish in front of him ; and then, standing behind, with one hand on his shoulder, would feed him as if he were a child, all the time talking of my generosity and asking if he tasted this and that. She had a greedy love of meat, and when the dish was a mixed one would say repeatedly, "Meat, meat, meat, man!" and poke bits of vegetable into his mouth ; then she would pick out bits of meat, put them into her own mouth, and wink at me! And they had been married thirty years!

This stuffing so increased Don Luis' pride that it constantly reminded him of the wealth and prodigality of life in his own village. When he could eat no more, or when Maria gave him

breathing space between the courses, he would throw his head from side to side in a searching manner—for in the house he was almost blind—and would inquire "Adonde, adonde, Don Carlos? Where are you, Don Carlos"; and then, "This reminds me of my village. When I was a young man every one was so fat that very few could walk as we walk nowadays, and the mules and donkeys were all hollow-backed from carrying the heavy crops of grain. All the meat was very tender, because, with plenty to eat, everything got fat very young." As he spoke Maria, standing arms akimbo, would put out her tongue—jealousy and disbelief personified—as if to say, "You old liar!" Then, unable to bear the strain any longer, she would yell at him, "Anda!"—get out—and then, flinging herself beseechingly at me, would say, "Listen, Don Carlos, it's not at all true," and raising her voice, she would cap all his boasting by shouting, "In my village we have a fountain with two spouts." This would fairly finish Don Luis, for Maria's boast was unanswerable. As a matter of fact, pure water and a continuous flow through one mean spout is equal to great riches in Spain. Another clincher of Maria's was that she had seen as many as three bonfires in her village on the eve of San Juan.

The simple truth amounted to this. Don Luis and Maria were natives of two villages about six miles apart. Once upon a time they travelled half-way, met, and married; and went off at a

tangent, where they had been ever since. They had, at any rate, been in a constant state of war regarding the merits and beauties of their respective pueblos; neither had ever seen the other's village, and though so near to both, some peculiar pride, or disinclination to condescend to so much as a visit, kept this old couple divided, and jealous to the verge of misery. Don Luis' boast was in some way justified, for his village, Alhourin, is known as one of the most beautiful in Spain. It is Moorish, as its name implies, and remains one of the finest examples of Moorish small domestic architecture. So much admired is Alhourin, that Maria must have heard its praises sung a thousand times, which must have been little short of a bitter grief to her, for her own pueblo of Cartama was very pretty. Sometimes I would offer to take her to Alhourin, at which she would grow churlish, make elaborate excuses, and find good reasons why we should go to Cartama instead.

About half a mile away were a few cottages, the boys from which often came to stand in the large doorway to watch the stranger eat meat. These boys ranged from four or five to about ten, and were practically naked. This did not matter much, as it was decidedly hot weather. Curious, hungry, and much afraid, they would grip each other's hands tightly, and stand in a stiff row. Maria was very jealous, and would throw water or anything else at them, but once they were in

my presence I encouraged them to stay. As the meal proceeded in full view of these boys, one would say boastfully, "I've had it once"; then another would perk up with "I've had it twice," or "three times"; then a third miserable little fellow would wipe his face in his only garment—his shirt—and grizzle out, "I haven't had it at all!" They were comparing notes of the times I had given them meat. My memory was fairly good, and I knew pretty well which boys had been most favoured: then I would beckon to one, and they would all advance in line, afraid to come singly, each holding his hand as far in front of the others as he possibly could, all of them saying in chorus, "I haven't had it at all, señor." Whoever got the bit of meat—and it was rarely bigger than a walnut—would hold it in his curled forefinger, lick it hard and industriously, then, rolling it in the skirt of his shirt, he would grab the wad in his hand, and fly down the bare slopes, anxious to get home with the prize before his comrades should wheedle or force it from him. There was something ludicrous, but always much more that was pathetic, in the behaviour of these children.

Like most women Maria longed to be rich. Out of her ten pesetas a week she contrived to save, and bought a sitting hen and a dozen eggs. In due time ten or eleven chickens appeared, and Maria grew to be as independent as she was overjoyed. She neglected me in the most brutal fashion, and made no better excuse than that

she must attend to her children. The chickens were certainly a fine lot; and I grew to live almost entirely on the radiant happiness that overspread Maria's wrinkled old face. It was a large face, round, much sun-scorched, and surmounted with a thin crop of straw-coloured hair. Her eyes were deep-set and searching, and her mouth was a large red rosette, for her lips turned outwards very much. She was not the least Spanish in appearance. Quite a new language came to Maria with her tribe of chickens, and she used to forget herself so far as to talk to me as if I were one of them. Then when she saw me laughing, and remembered her mistake, she would spurn me with something like, "Bah! you're only a barren old rooster!"

One morning at peep-of-day Maria burst into my quarto, and with a horribly wailing moan threw herself at the foot of my bed and collapsed. I got up and laid her on the floor. As she breathed heavily, and champed her mouth, I concluded she was in a fit. I undid her dress at the throat, and tried to bring her round, but got no more result than a horrible fit of crying. She lay for an hour or more in this state, and showed no signs either of getting better, or of dying outright. So I took a can, the domestic utensil of the country which is used for cooling the floor in hot weather; and with this I watered her, first on the head and chest, and then all over! It made no difference. She sighed, cried, and rolled about as if in great

mental rather than physical agony ; and I became aware that she knew of my presence, and how I was behaving, but either could not or would not stop her tears.

This mad grief went on for three solid days and nights. What I got to eat doesn't matter. All that I remember is that I was utterly worn out from the starving and the unceasing yells and complaints of Maria. Then, almost on a sudden, she seemed to recover and regain her speech. The very first words she uttered were, " Ah ! I never had but one chance to make a fortune, and now that is taken from me ! " I was still in the dark, but the dawn soon appeared. The cause of all this trouble was to be made plain. Maria had got up as usual at peep-of-day, to find that a wolf, or lynx, had come in the night and carried off the hen and all her precious children. When this was told to me, I could recall a fluttering, rubbing noise during the night of the tragedy, but had thought it came from mules, as they were in the habit of rubbing themselves against the walls outside. Poor Maria's face changed completely. I never saw her smile with full-faced gladness again. Instead of lifting things, she pushed them about, she nursed a bitter grief, and would see neither sweetness nor hope anywhere.

She had a son in South America. He had been away for many years, and seldom or never wrote. On my writing-table was the photo of a young girl, also one of my mother—Maria always insisted that

the young girl was my novia—sweetheart. Coming into my room one day, and standing over me as I wrote, she said impatiently, "Mad, mad; reading, reading, writing, writing; always this, always the other!" I took no notice. Then, looking on the two portraits, she inquired sadly, "Which do you love most; your mother or your sweetheart?" I knew what was passing through her mind, and said cruelly, "Oh, my sweetheart, of course." She turned away, and said with fury, "Worst curse of God be on you—you men are all the same!"

There is a curious custom in Spain of stating one's age in money; thus, when I asked Maria how old she might be, she replied, "Three duros and a little more." A duro contains twenty reals, and allowing a real for each year she was over sixty.

In spite of her good cooking I contracted a fever. Every ailment is a fever in Spain.

As Maria professed to diagnose my case and prescribe a cure, she started off to town, which was some miles distant. The Spanish chemist is a primitive individual. One wanting medicine must take bottle or jar or box, and as Maria had forgotten to take her vessel, and could not manage to borrow or buy a bottle, my medicine was given to her in a large basin. It was very hot weather, with the road inches deep in dust. She managed to bring home about two tablespoonfuls of muddy liquid. She was quick to say, "This is food and

drink for you " ; but I refused to take either until she had strained and re-strained the stuff through the fancy flounces of my pillow. After that I soon got well. I suppose the risks of delay were too great.

For the sake of economy, suits of clothes are roughly cut and just tacked together, with the necessary linings, buttons, braidings, and thread in a parcel all complete. Don Luis was head and shoulders taller than I, but so lean as to call for very narrow garments. Still saving out of my six-and-eightpence a week, Maria was making Don Luis a suit of clothes, and as she wanted to keep the fact secret from him she used me as a lay figure. This was a comic business. I used almost to lie down and roll, so ludicrous were her remarks and general behaviour when fitting me, and calculating the allowance for the extra length and the reduced width ; for instance, Luis's legs were about half as thick as mine, so Maria would drag the stuff round me and begin to sew it up, and when I rebelled, chide me for my complaints, telling me I ought to be proud to be decked in such beautiful new garments ! When Don Luis did come into possession of his clothes they certainly fitted him well ; and Maria was so pleased with her work that she kept him at home for an extra day or two, for the proud pleasure of seeing him strut about.

I had two knickerbocker suits of soft brown flannel, and in an unguarded moment I told

Maria she should have them the day I left. Here was a dilemma! She did not want me to go, and if I stayed long the garments would be worn out! So she schemed and appealed to my vanity. There were inkstains and other spots which would not come out in the wash; some parts were getting threadbare, and patches were unbecoming to a caballero. Her appeals were so frequent that I gave her one suit. She put it on at once and appeared before me. Shades of Bonnie Scotland! I had never seen anything like this! Maria evermore went about the house and the hills outside, when looking for her sweet herbs, as my double! Honestly, I grew almost to hate myself, for I was always wondering if the difference in my height, and one or two minor details, could make me look any less absurd than Maria.

CHAPTER V

DIVERSIONS AT CABELLO

AFTER leaving Maria, I went to an estate far famed for the production of muscatels, and there I lived with a capataz and his family of three sons and a daughter—Trinidad—who, with the gente, provided many satisfying hours. Of Trinidad I shall tell you much a little later.

The details of the muscatel industry are extremely interesting, for it is steeped in superstition and quaint traditions. Saints and witches respectively provide the good and the bad qualities of every harvest. Santa Anna paints the grapes on the tenth of August, and the quality of her brush is gauged by the colours present in the sky. Woe betide the harvest if the weather be overcast and Santa Anna cannot get enough blue, chestnut, and deep red for her palette, for these are the desired colours in muscatels.

" Bacchus loves the hills," muscatel is Queen of the Valleys. She is the royal lady among fruits, and runs no risk of being deposed from her court at Malaga ; every nation supports her claims, without her no ceremony is complete. The superior

muscatel is "mellow as autumn and fragrant as the spring"; by a rare combination of climate, soil, and technical skill Malaga alone can produce this fruit to perfection. Stewards of many royal households purchase direct from Spain, sending their embossed and flowered silks and papers, royal favours, national colours, arms, richly lined cabinets, and all the rest of what is termed "etiquetta" to parcel and adorn the precious fruit. Fashions in packing come and go at the whim of a princess or court lady, for whatever she chooses to dislike or to suggest is mentioned in the royal order, and affects the "get up" of the fruit for each country.

Muscatels are made from a large greenish-gold grape named "Gordo-blanco"—fat white—and the more refined type of amber tone, "Muscat of Malaga." It may be hard to realise that these grapes yield the deep blue-black dried fruit; but it is true; no black grapes are converted into muscatels. In the process of drying the fruit takes on a black, chestnut, or dark red colour, according to the soil and season; the degree of ripeness when cut; the amount of sugar and iron it contains, and the weather during the drying season. The best fruit is obtained from "vegetas," or well-drained terraces of sweet pulverous earth. Low, rank, and undrained soils cannot yield a high-class muscatel, and the discrimination and skill used in the management often amounts to genius.

To the eye a lagar, hacienda, or finca—names applied to fruit farms and other rural estates—presents nothing attractive, being dry red or grey patches of low-lying land covered with sprawling bushes of dust-laden leaves ; but when the grapes begin to ripen, men and boys seeking work appear in swarms, and one loses sight of nature in the crowds of hungry and variegated human beings.

Dogs and goats are very fond of grapes, and are only kept off them by rural guards ; but the greatest enemy of all is the starling. This bird flies over from Africa in such millions as literally to darken the earth. Wherever they camp for the night they leave a desert ; every particle of fruit, leaf, tender shoot, and piece of soft bark vanishes. As the saying is, " Many crops spell various fortunes ; one crop of starlings spells ruin." The blowing of a southern wind and the sound of wings in the air produces panic, men's faces blanch with terror. In despair, bells are rung, guns fired, torches lighted, and donkeys, mules, and horses are galloped up and down and round about to scare " los bichos "—the beasts—as they are termed. Some calm souls rely on their appeals to the Mother of God, or the promise of a priest, who for a consideration has blessed and waved an arm of protection over the estate ; others sit and smoke, looking into their open hands and saying, " If it is to be, it will be. If it is not to be, it will not be."

Mucha sol—much sun,
Poca viento—little wind,
Nubes ninguna—clouds none,

is the desire of the muscatel grower.

To be able to judge when fruit is perfectly ripe gives a man superior status ; and this, together with a stentorian voice and a store of choice expletives, forms the ideal capataz.

The first work is to prepare the tordos—walled beds of tamped earth and gravel on which the fruit is dried.

No living tree or anything odorous is allowed near ; the tordos are always placed away from water in positions securing the maximum of heat and a minimum of shade and moist air. All the material of the tordos is turned and tamped, turned and tamped, for muscatels may not be made on damp or unclean ground. One man is drafted off to watch the sky, and arrange for the placing and protection of the fruit according to his weather wisdom.

Near to Malaga, men seek work in thousands, and whilst recognising their misfortunes it is impossible to avoid laughing at their darns and patches. Spain, so often described as a land of rags, is more truly a land of patches. Any one may wear a patch and suffer no social declension ; all the poor are patched, in infinite shapes, sizes, and colours. In the towns are patch-shops, containing piles of pieces of material of all colours ; and the rule is to make a bargain as regards their

size and strength. Hence, one sees such incongruities as a strip of Turkey red from a soldier's trousers sewn on white drill or yellow cord. I was at times so fascinated by the patchwork as to feel I must engage men to enjoy the spectacle of them; once I bought the skirt of an old tramp woman because it was made of hundreds of pieces and was a work of ingenuity and art; but, alas, when I thought I had got it safely home, my friends did not share my transports, and burnt what they termed "the beastly old thing!"

There is great art in knowing when the muscatel is ripe. It should not be cut till all its growth has ceased; then the stem and seed is brown, the skin fine, the sugar at its maximum, and there is no free juice. To prevent waste and secure the highest quality, the men are carefully selected, some to cut the first-class fruit, others the second-class, and others the third. Here the capataz shines in trying to put all others of his class in the shade. His stock call was, "Gentlemen, only the ripe ones! Only the ripe ones! The ripe ones! Nothing more! Solely the ripe ones! By God, ripe ones!" Variations of this theme employed all his time, except when it was interlarded with more vigorous language. A man's pride in being placed among the firsts would be sweet to see, till the capataz, detecting some fault in his work, would send him to the second or third group. This "insult" would usually stupefy and deprive the unfortunate of speech. He would show his wretched-

ness by sulking and a silent gesture. Occasionally a man would resent it by an oratorical appeal to his fellows.

The jokes and pokes incidental to cutting grapes are endless. The fruit should never be touched ; if a man cannot find stem enough to handle, one hears his mates remarking ironically of him that he has the masterful dedos de Dios—fingers of God ! The appearance of green fruit in a man's basket gives all his mates the stomach-ache ; they writhe and gesticulate in a fit of the gripes. Upsetting the basket is a bad omen, and leads to the erection of a stake or pile of stones as a monument ; all coming near which preach a sermon, offer a prayer, or make other bantering outpouring for the soul of the lost grapes and of him who had destroyed them.

Carried to the tordos the fruit is laid best side downwards, and not disturbed till the major part is dry. The grapes being unequal in size, some dry sooner than others. Drying takes from nine to twenty-one days. Rare skill is shown in judging when the fruit is dry ; it involves continual watching to ensure lifting it at the right time. Dry fruit is passive, but only an expert can detect this condition to a nicety, and even an hour too much or too little spoils what might have been a fine sample. Once dried and cooled in a large airy shed, the quality is discernible, and the class of packing is decided upon. The bunches which appear so natural to the consumer are all made artificially by

hand! The largest bunch of even-sized grapes will yield no more than ten to fifteen granos—individual fruit—all the others being uneven or in some way defective and cut away. The packer chooses a shapely racema—bunch—and treating it as a frame, hangs and twists it, and contrives to weave a handsome cluster of even-sized and even-toned fruit; all this is done without handling it other than with a little stick and a pair of scissors.

To describe in further detail might prove tedious, but there are scores of particulars of the highest importance to be considered if the muscatel is to be perfect. The Spanish method of eating this fruit is unlike our own; and at first appears dirty, though it is not really so. A Spaniard breaks the fruit at the stalk end, and with finger and thumb presses steadily from the bottom, till the congealed flesh exudes in a round ball, so that it can be taken without the skin. To the connoisseur this is important, as the skin spoils the flavour of the fruit.

The best class of cutters and packers receive but six reals, or a fraction over a shilling, a day, with two meals of soup, bread, oil, salad, and black figs. The hours of labour are from daybreak till dark, but long days of hot glaring sunshine and concern for the harvest leave little room for complaining or dullness. All the day long there is singing—free, wild, heart-born singing—and cuentas—stories—bawled abroad, as men pass to and

fro or crouch over the tordos at the patient task of laying or lifting grapes. In the evenings are games, songs, and tales. The Spanish do not play cards as much as we do, but where a few men are gathered together a pack is generally to be seen. Spanish cards are composed of cups, swords, clubs, and gold pieces. It appears that our spade is a contracted sword, and our club an abbreviated bludgeon!

The sugar-cane furnishes the most convenient form of mild gambling amongst poor youths and boys. They contrive to split the cane by either tossing it in the air and catching it on a knife, or having it thrown violently towards them, when they are supposed to catch it on the blade and divide it from end to end. One wins what he succeeds in splitting. We had plenty of this sport whenever daylight afforded; but more common were such games as could be played by the aid of an oil lamp or two. An amusing Andalusian game is the yard race—sitting on the floor with legs and hands in the air, one is supposed to lift oneself and bump along for a yard, the first over the distance getting the prize. Although so simple, and, as some may think, so silly, it yields irresistibly comic situations, and is so difficult of accomplishment that its interest cannot wane. The only danger is that one's trousers may give out before the yard has been negotiated!

Quail-callers are the most artistic of liars. They have their home in Spain. The quail, or red-

legged partridge, is to Spain what the domestic pigeon is to England, and the most popular Spanish field-sport is quail shooting or trapping by aid of a decoy. The quail-caller is one who makes a speciality of decoying game. He is usually a tatterdemalion, hardy in frame and possessed of rare lore, but always spoiled by his gift of lying, for the truth is never enough for him. He can imitate a cock bird entrapped or calling to its mate, a hen bird scared from her nest or alarmed for her young; in fact, any and every bird-call is known to him, so that at all seasons he can induce birds to come to him through fogs or mists, and to follow him even for miles across country, entering his house to be entrapped.

I have never seen a quail follow in such manner, but so frequently is it stated to have been done that I have little doubt it is true. To assist the mimicry a cordoniz—quill—with a piece of leather lace bound round it, is carried in the mouth; some men use a piece of bone like a buckle with cotton round it. We had two or three quail-callers of repute amongst our gente, but, to write the truth, we were only interested in them when they lied.

For variety, and to satisfy their curiosity, I induced some men to take a turn at boxing; and after gloves had been rudely fashioned we set to work; but plucky as they were they disliked falling on the hard floor, and the sleeping-sacks of chaff were spread; this meant rolling about and innumerable falls, and produced great fun; but

there was constant danger of touching a man's honour, as any suspicion of defeat angered him almost to madness. Several times men volunteered to show me how they could fight with the knife, and the coat off and swung like lightning round the left arm to form a guard. This was always meant to let me know that if I was superior to them in one way they were my equals in another.

Occasionally the servants would come from the great house, and then we had something like musical evenings. The women would never mingle amongst the men or sit down, but would stand in the doorway of the packing-shed, or out in the clear night, and, holding each other's hands, would insistently encourage the men to tell tales or to sing. Make no mistake, Spaniards have a soul for music—a sense of feeling, power, and interpretation which is most rare elsewhere.

There is a trembling, grieving, wavering, awful fear, the agony rather than the joy of life, so sad, so unavailing ; such clear vision ; such refinement of emotion ; withal given in voices most full of expression and delicacy of sound.

It takes time to discern the fidelity, which is the beauty of Spanish song. The form is not easily comprehended. Fleeting thoughts ; home longings ; farewells ; visions ; memories ; love-sighs ; labour ; fortune ;—these in couplet form are so much in little as to escape the more dispassionate northern races.

ANDALUSIAN COUPLETS

Dreaming of thee—dreaming of thee—dreaming of thee—
I fell asleep;
And falling asleep I waked to love thee!

. . . . .

I'll ask my confessor to make me a penitent,
That I may kneel to you always.

. . . . .

If they gave me the millions at which I value your person,
You might say to the world, you have a rich sweetheart.

. . . . .

I don't want any singing—singing of "tranquillity"!
I want light songs of love that flow out of your soul!

. . . . .

I'll ask the Evangelist to alter his teaching,—
For I know that your window is the way to Heaven.

. . . . .

Oh, nightingale! Oh, nightingale! Why sing you? why sing you?
My heart is sad! my love is gone! Why sing you? why sing you?

. . . . .

If you should doubt my love, my love will fade;
The lyre will lose its music and the world its flowers.

. . . . .

Ay de Mi! Ay de Mi! Words tell not my sorrow,—
I know not my complaint! Ay de Mi! Ay de Mi!

. . . . .

GITANESCOS

Gypsy couplets may be heard over all Spain, but they are most common in Andalusia. The following are some examples:—

As I sat under a tree without fruit I sighed,—
Sighed, as I thought—how poor is he who hath nothing to give!

. . . . .

I should never have thought that your love was poison,
Served in a cup of gold.

Man is a serpent—a serpent with wings—
Which at times bear him up to the skies,
And at others bear him down to the ground.

. . . . .

The ass and the gypsy share a hard road,
Hard bed and hard fare.
Father Confessor, forgive their sins?

. . . . .

I sing for I am happy—I am happy and must sing;
For you have driven all care out of my heart.

. . . . .

Since I saw you in a lonely hour,
I have discovered a new world and am become its king.

. . . . .

I am under your window—and its bars are strong,
But our love will break all barriers down.

I believe the couplet and "pensimiento" reveal the soul of Spain more truly than anything which is done or said in the land. Romances and old-fashioned stories are recited with as much freedom as ever; and to the call of "Come now!" every man would contribute his share.

As the maidens retired, some of the younger men would steal after them to play the part of "iron eaters." Lovers are so called because they talk through the iron-barred or latticed windows.

One of our workmen died, and we took him in his best clothes on a bier obtained from the church porch, and buried him coffinless in the deep square pit which formed the common grave of his village. The cimenterio was at the crown of a steep hill above the church; as we climbed a bell was clanged and rattled at the will of two boys. The

bells are hung in window-like spaces of the towers, and have heavy wooden frames, enabling those who ring them to turn the bells over and over. A priest led the little procession, and tiring of the hill he sat down and puffed at a cigarette. Then the bell stopped, and we saw the two boys locked round its frame, their legs gripping the tongue, and by means of a hand and spare foot pressing the wall and turning themselves over and over! The sight was sickening, but the boys betrayed no fear till our calls reached them, and the priest told them in forcible language to "go on with the music."

CHAPTER VI

A LOVE STORY

ONE day a friend asked me to accompany him to a christening, and in support of his request he showed me this letter.

"DEAR FRIEND JOSEPH,

"Will you come to-night and be presented to our first-born son? If he cannot hold out his hand, I will welcome you for him. Try and persuade your English friend to come. Father Julius will be here till nightfall, and I pray most fervently that his blessing will ever attend my boy. With the priest out of the way we shall go in for a high old time of 'Rats in the hole.'

"Yours always,

"LUIS."

We went to the presentation. It is not miscalled, for the baby is presented, and then you present it with something. I gave a tiny pair of shoes made of strips of coloured felt, ingeniously plaited. There were a great many peasant women present, and they criticised and admired the shoes amazingly; some went so far as to say before the poor mother that the shoes were far too good for her first-born son. Nearly an hour was spent in trying to discover if any baby in all their ken had

ever possessed a pair of shoes bought out of a shop.

There was, at this christening, a kind of hired clown, who played the violin whilst contorting his body. He also made ingenious jokes, demanding forfeits which went to the baby. He succeeded in playing an air with his hands behind him, another with one hand in his pocket, and one with an arm buttoned inside his waistcoat. Many of his antics were vulgar in the extreme, whilst others were clever, and he made some smart rhymes on the company. Every one sat round the walls of the two or three little rooms ; and, from the oldest to the youngest, all drank the health of the baby in tiny glass cups of white spirit. The father of the child was a modeller in clay, and with a basin of water and clay he sketched group after group of those present on the whitewashed wall. For delicacies we ate pine-kernels, lupin-seed, and muscatels. Many women present had babies, and some gave their infants poppy-water to keep them quiet. This was not done in any mean spirit, but because the poor mothers had not sufficient natural food for their offspring.

Spain was frightfully poor at this time, and in the most generous season of the year the majority of the peasants were in a state of hopeless want. Wherever I went on the road I was appealed to by children for a little for God's sake, as their fathers were in Buenos Aires. This appeal was so frequent and unvarying that I thought there must be some

attractive catch in the statement that the father was in Buenos Aires, but on asking, a man made the reason clear. "Yes, it is quite true their fathers are in Buenos Aires. A few years ago some rascals came to this province and induced thousands of our best men to go to South America. After a year or so they were to be joined by their wives and families, but the scheme was a swindle, and thousands of women and children are husbandless and fatherless from this cause."

One night I came home to find the path to the house illuminated. My host, the capataz, had died. He had not been a strict churchman, and I found the family holding an argument over the wisdom or otherwise of calling in the priest. Every available candle had been used to light up the avenue between the road and the house, and the wife and daughter had placed one or two near the head of the dead man. In moving round to condole with the members of the family I upset one of these candles, and the faces of the women became whiter than ever with holy terror. They could not believe that their husband and father could be in any way safe after this malventura. I know it was remembered against me for months, and the widow was especially bitter in accusing me of adding to her grief.

An instructive chapter might be written on the Lady in Spain, for she is the most distinctive and unrelated woman in Europe. He would, indeed, be a master who, knowing the subject, could make

her appear as she is and has her being. The mistress of Cabello was a great lady, a direct descendant of Peter the Cruel and his consort, Maria Padilla. She was about thirty years of age; rather small, delicately formed, and beautiful; but not particularly Spanish in appearance. She had married at eighteen, and at the time I write of had a precocious son of ten. Her husband was ten years her senior, a fine man of German extraction; where Germany mates with Spain one sees the most absolute indifference to women and her concerns. Don A. was fond of his wife and a loyal husband, but he and she lived in different worlds, as is so often the case in upper-class Spain; the wife never going out, and the husband never at home. This does not mean that all the men are rakes, but that their social habits keep them up at all hours, a custom forced by a climate which makes the night more congenial than the day, and when a man is employed through the day, he works so easily, and takes his siesta so often, that he can pass most of his nights in the club or calle and not show signs of wanting more rest.

Doña Maria was a devout churchwoman, her only diversion consisted in going to Mass two or three times a week, gathering a sheaf of polite scandal and bringing it home for the benefit of her servants. This is the most surprising, as it is one of the most pleasing facts of Spanish life. The greatest lady regards her maid in the light

of an intimate, and the maid, though reverencing her mistress, speaks critically and frankly to her on every subject. Doña Maria kept six maids, and for a wonder they were maids, for it is most unusual for single women to act as servants. Mothers and daughters go out together. If a girl has no relations, she is adopted by an aunt or older woman, who has absolute control of her. Only in the rarest circumstances are young single women found in a Spanish household. There are two reasons for this. The girls are notoriously weak and incapable of resisting the advances of men ; and where they are servants their masters invarably take advantage of them. The exceptional reputation of Don A. and his wife gave them the privilege of keeping a number of young servants. Only the cook was married, and she was under thirty. A seventh, in the form of a doncella, or lady's-maid, was a well-bred girl of great wit and charm, and not a bit like a Spaniard ; for she was educated, in no way superstitious, petulant, or afraid of men—a fine girl and the life and soul of the household. She was always inventing games and pitting Spain against the rest of the world, bracketing herself with me, for she had been partly educated in France. Our coachman weighed eighteen stone, and as Lola, the familiar name for Dolores, and I together weighed but a little more, it was her favourite challenge that we should have a tug-of-war, and decide which might be the weightiest part of the world !

Spain always won, for we found that the coachman tied himself to a post in the stable, and, pull as we would, we could never get him out. This had been his challenge, and Lola and I made any number of trials before discovering the trick. At first all were shocked at the masculine play of Dolores and her near contact with a man, but after a time the feeling wore off and the whole household gave way to this kind of diversion.

Doña Maria's interest in her maids, and their affection for her, was quite beautiful. After dinner it was her custom to pick a few sweets from the table, small dried and crystallised fruits—for there are no puddings of any kind—and rising with the lightness and joy of a little girl, she would call, "Ay, my girls! Where are you?" At this there would be a rustling and chattering in the long passage leading to the kitchen, and Doña Maria would feed them out of her hand, as so many twittering birds. This performance used to take place almost daily, and one never thought it silly or without value. The cook was almost too proud to be fed, she got too much food as it was; but her mistress would never allow her to escape, and in the end she took her share like the others.

What might be called the Mass meeting was always entertaining. Twenty-four hours before the time of starting every maid and man would be saying excitedly, "Doña Maria's going to Mass to-morrow!" "Oh, my! Doña Maria's going to Mass to-morrow!" "Much favour of God on

Doña Maria ! " " Oh, a good time on the road for Doña Maria ! " and a hundred other exclamations of hope and well-wishing. Then, when the morning came, a great lumbering coach would be rolled out, a pair of most beautiful mouse-coloured mules attached, and the eighteen-stone coachman would climb aloft to the envy of all who stood round. He usually got on his perch an hour before starting-time, for he liked to be admired and envied. The church was but three miles away, it might have been three hundred judging by the preparation and the ceremony of saying good-bye. The house overlooked the courtyard where the coachman sat in waiting, and for an hour or more feminine heads would be poked out of every window, all shouting and calling at the same time, " Have you got this ? Have you got that for Doña Maria ? " There were always a score or two of men about at this early morning hour, and these, too, caught the contagion and spoke of nothing but Mass, coachman, the making of journeys, and the monumental goodness of Doña Maria. I confess to liking her as much as the others ; but I got almost sick of the everlasting repetition of her name. When at last she appeared—garbed as a simple little nun, with a long jet rosary on her arm, a small black fan, and a little black bag-purse, one had a feeling of disappointment ; but she was the great lady after all, there could be no mistake about that. Two or three of the maids would always be in close attendance, eyeing her

from top to toe for threads or anything that might possibly be out of place. Doña Maria and the coachman would exchange compliments, as if they had not seen each other for years, she inquiring after his and his family's health and all his worldly concerns, and he of hers in exactly the same terms and manner. Then the excitement would begin to brew ; the maids would say dejectedly to themselves, and to each other, and up to the sky, " Oh, Doña Maria's going away." " Oh, Doña Maria's going to see the padre." " Oh, how sad I am, Doña Maria's going away ! " There would be a commingling of complaints, sad shakings of heads, and no end of expressions of hope for a safe journey. Of course, there could be no hurry ! Hurry is impossible in Spain, sheer madness, a thing to disgust one, and put one to shame. So Maria would let them have their wail out, then she would look at the coach and the coachman, as if she had forgotten his presence, and say, " Oh, Pedro, I think I'll get you to take me to Mass this morning." The coachman would bow and the maids would grab and lift Doña Maria into her seat. Some would kiss her ; all would raise their hands in good-bye when the coach lumbered off. She would be away about three hours ! How could that time be endured ? There was no housekeeper, every maid was a law unto herself, and as such incapable of work whilst her mistress was away. They would hang about in a group, chattering and twittering, going the round of the gardens and climbing to

view-points whence they might look along the road.

About half a mile on this road was a wooden bridge, and on crossing it our coach might be detected from its sound. False alarms there were to no end, and the words " bridge " and " coach " were constantly heard from the time Doña Maria was due to return. When she did at last arrive, the maids would rush down to the entrance gates, stop the coach, pull their mistress out, and almost stifle her with embraces and inquiries and congratulations. She always seemed tired of the adventure, apart from this home reception, and often had actually to beat them off with her fan. Of course, she lived on this unstinted devotion, and when at last they got her home, they would sit round and listen patiently to what she had to tell in the way of news. This was generally very simple and old-fashioned, for after Mass she always breakfasted with an old aunt, a rigid churchwoman, and the subjects dealt with were chiefly of the Church and its superstitions.

After the death of Trinidad's father I succeeded to some of his duties, and lived partly in the great house and partly in that of Trinny's mother. Dolores and Trinny were fast friends, and as I confess to a real fondness for Trinny, the three of us passed a deal of time together. It is simply impossible for a man and woman of any age to walk or be alone together in Southern Spain. But on the principle that there is safety in numbers,

and that foreigners don't count, I often found myself with Dolores and Trinidad, and we went so far as to take long walks in the campo, gathering the lovely caper flowers and their seed-pods—alcaparas—for pickling. At other times we went exploring the hills ; and it was very interesting to observe how these Spanish women revealed their sense of freedom when they found themselves alone, and at the same time how they wore looks of awful dread as they contemplated the return, for they were afraid of being scandalised and losing their reputation. But fear as they might, one class of adventure never failed to draw them forth. It was that of chameleon catching.

The chameleon is the delight of the world once you have fairly caught and tamed and known him. In Europe chameleons are found only in the extreme south ; and they vary a good deal in size and form, the season of the year, the food and the light influencing their colour and behaviour. In their native state they are not remarkable for anything more than their extraordinary swiftness of movement. They live in dry rocky country and feed on flies and other small insects. They are seldom out of their holes and crannies, excepting during bright and hot weather ; for they are of a hibernating and torpid character, and such good Spaniards that they don't mind whether they get a meal to-day or next year. They are becoming scarce, for a country boy is sure of a peseta for a live chameleon. To catch them, the best means is

a flying net, held in such a way that it can be thrown over the rock on which the chameleon is lying. They seem to know that they are a prize, and avoid small rocks or any place which may be easily netted. During the heat of the day a chameleon may be seen working round the edge of a broad flat rock. He conceals part of his body and tail by letting it hang over the edge, for he is anxious to secure a fly for a meal. You may see the fly and the chameleon ten feet apart and look with all your eyes and then see nothing; the chameleon has gone and the fly has gone, and the fly won't come back; the chameleon may, but not to-day; he has dined, is satisfied, and has gone home.

Now it seems impossible that this could be, but I am stating the literal truth when I write that I have seen a chameleon a foot or more in length on one side of a stone and a fly in the middle or on the other side of it, and have seen them both vanish, and been certain that the chameleon caught the fly, though I never could see him make the capture or the way of his going. The only clue to the fact comes a moment before the rush is made—the tail moves up into a convex curve, the spine becomes rigid, and the head flattens on the stone.

As a pet and source of pure fun, the chameleon can have few equals; he has, moreover, the almost priceless advantage over most members of a household in that he calls for no special quarters or attention. Give him a curtain-pole or a piece of

string hanging in an airy position that he may survey the world from, and he'll look after himself and bother no one. His eyeballs are practically outside his head, and he has a marvellous power of rolling them and looking all ways at once. Each eye is about the size of a pea, a grey disk as of indiarubber, and down a narrow hole one discerns a black diamond glistening, quivering, almost speaking, shooting out its emotions, and at the same time keeping a wonderful gaze on everything within range.

I kept a chameleon through a long summer, and in common fairness can but thank him for hundreds of merry hours. I hung a string from the ceiling, tied a few knots in it for perches, and told my chameleon to make himself at home. He did so. For the first three weeks the weather was not to his liking, and he slept, at least I never saw him move or show a sign of life. I would catch flies and gum a wing to a piece of wood or paper in the hope of tempting him to wake up. But he was quite superior to my attention and would take only such flies as he caught for himself. All the fun and mystery of this creature and others of his race lies in the roll and glance of the eyes. When on the watch for a meal, the eyeballs sweep round like a telescope searching the heavens, and the black diamond of a pupil fixes the poor fly, until it loses all power of flight and is simply mopped up by the great mouth. The wonderful colouring of the chameleon is to be seen chiefly in literature, for

they are not otherwise remarkable. I have handled these animals in various situations and seasons, and seen no more than a slight increase of purple, violet, green and gold when the weather is very hot and the skin is distended about the neck and inside the legs and arms.

Trinny, who was all heart, often regaled me with the love affairs of her family and friends, till one day I was emboldened to ask her if she never had a sweetheart of her own. With much spirit and sign of emotion she indignantly asserted she had been truly loved. But as she phrased it, " A cruel world prevented the right things to happen." She was short-waisted, full-bosomed, and a very animate little figure, all movement from the waist upwards. Her lips were a beautiful cherry-red, her teeth perfect, and she had the most kindly eyes. She moved up and down the room, her hands on her breast, though haughty in bearing, racked with longing to express and rid herself of the pain still gnawing at her heart. " Come," I pleaded, " tell me all about it." Half tearful, half fearful, she went to the door. Her mother sat sewing in the great arched entrance to the patio. Trinny felt the coast to be clear, and signed to me to stand in the safe position of the doorway. " You are true ? You would like to know ? " she inquired, and seeing my nod, she began : " Eighteen I, and that was six years ago. Oh, by my soul, the years have wings ! A brother of mine was a lieutenant of Engineers, and quartered in the

north. On a special mission he came to his own pueblo, and we knew not of this till one morning he came very early and surprised my mother by saluting her at her own door. 'Keep your hat on and come in,' said my mother. And he entered a soldier complete, erect, in beautiful dress, and all much adorned. One kiss my mother gave him, and to me he bowed and called me an improved little girl, for he had been absent for three years. Then he said, 'I have a friend, a brother officer, with me. Permit me, mother mine, to ask a favour for this distinguished señor to enter your house.' 'Con muchas gusto,' replied my mother, and my brother went to introduce his friend. Oh, soul of me for a handsome man! Six feet, young, strong, full of grace, animation, and courage, eyes brilliant, and a whole body full of love quite noble. All this I saw in a moment. With a profound bow he uncovered, but my mother said, 'Enter, enter, and cover you, this is your house.' At this moment I stood hiding my breasts with all my hands, for I felt my heart escaping, and there in the dark corner of the room I did not want to be noticed. But my brother said, 'Friend Sebastiano, this is my sister.' Then when I saw the handsome señor look at me, I was covered with shame and said but a small word to his salutation. But in this moment he was more than the friend of my brother, he was the world to me. My mother's eyes were upon us, and I was timid, but wilful in a way I had not felt before. After some talk my

brother rose to salute my mother and retire. 'To-morrow, with your favour, I will with Don Sebastiano come again, for our work will be over, and we shall need to bid you adios.' My mother gave a kiss to my brother and her hand to Don Sebastiano. But he gave me his eyes and a sign of the hand. With this display of affection and a military salute he left us. Ay, Mother of God, that was a painful day! My mother was always cold and not wanting a lover for me; but early in the morning I gathered jasmine for my hair, and put a handkerchief of coloured flowers over my shoulders, and at the same moment the two soldiers appeared at the portal. 'Mother of mine, sister of mine, I hope you're well,' spoke my brother, and Don Sebastiano the same. 'Enter, enter, gentlemen, and keep covered,' called my mother. All agitation I stood by the door, the courage of a wild animal in all my frame. Not fearing my mother I said to the noble one, 'When do you march?' 'At this hour!' 'When do you come again?' 'I am a soldier and cannot say.' 'But I want you.' 'I also want.' 'What is possible?' 'Esperanza—Bonita niña—Esperanza is possible.' They stayed but a moment longer, and then saluted. 'Adios' and 'Adios' we all said, and I all sad made one plea for them to stay longer or come once more. But Sebastiano said 'Impossiblé,' and with more adios and much talk from the hand they marched from the room! Oh, that moment, and that day! I could not speak nor

work, nor find tears nor think of any remedy! All my heart was in pain. I went to my quarto and held my breast tightly, oh, *very* tightly! but my heart broke!" Don Sebastiano never returned, and that was all her story.

The breasts of a Spanish woman are sacred, and as her heart may be read through them it is unfair and always rude to look beyond her face. A man's eye resting on a flower or ornament on the throat or breast may provoke the remark, "You are searching!" or "You have mean thoughts of me!" The breasts are held pressed or covered with crossed hands as signs of modesty, shame, truth, fear, and deep emotion.

"He gave me his eyes and a sign of the hand." This reveals the whole man. The lover of the South has no use for his tongue, the hand expressing every thought and shade of emotion.

This story may appear too precipitate and abrupt, but therein is it true to the way of love in Spain. The time involved, less than an hour—a halt! front! right about turn! march! sort of visit, for the men were on military duty. The swift feeling and sure speech are both in the Andalusian way, and the collapse of Trinny, in spite of her holding her breast very tightly—but her heart broke—her own words—shows how strong was the flood, and how soon and completely life was changed for ever.

These incidents occurred fifteen years ago, and now I come again to Cabello to find the children

I knew grown to men and women, to learn that my poor old Maria is in an asylum, and that Don Luis, though very old, is in South America with his son. And Trinny? Well, she is married. After some hunting I found her eldest brother Paco, the best educated and therefore the ne'er-do-well and the most likeable; and after a day's yarn we decided to call on another brother who lived in the country on his own farm. This journey meant a trudge from morn to night over very rough and tiring land, but I walked every inch with a feeling of profound joy, for I knew I should be welcomed. Pepê, the brother whom we went to see, was waiting in an olive grove—he had been there the best part of two days—and when he saw me afar off he ran like a mad thing and fell on my neck, and hugged and kissed me, and cried and sobbed, till I had to cry also, and in real earnest, for I was overcome by this display of human feeling. I had never seen its like before. It was really splendid, and I could hardly believe it genuine, for I had done nothing to aid him in any way. We sat for hours talking, he holding my hands and rubbing them as if he were a mother and I a long-lost son. His wife, whom I had not seen before, was very kind, and not in the least jealous. I have indeed got a moral lift here, for I discern absolute affection where there is no possible chance of mercenary reward.

Trinny is married to a farmer, an exceedingly kind and intelligent man, but with a poor bit of

country, and so has to struggle for a livelihood. Paco and I decided to call on Trinny together. On the road we met an elder sister, who told me that Trinny was happy though married, and with this as a refreshing draught we went on. We walked for hours over stony rises, down into dry gullies, and along wearying naked ranges ; then past an old monastery and through olive and carob and raisin plantations, all the time looking at towering mountains, with here and there green lawns—oranges—plantations in the watered valleys. Always, or nearly always, we were in sight of the sea, and with Trinny's house of pure white, with a few upright trees about it, showing on the side of a mighty chocolate-red hill. Absolute stillness everywhere. We alone made a sound. Oh, I forgot ; there were mobs of goats with clinking bells at times, and also a mule or pig or donkey with its bell. It was a long climb up the last hill, and as we got near the house we feared we were making the journey in vain, for the place was shut up. But the folk were taking their siesta, and a big rattle of the door from Paco woke them. Trinny came forward, almost the same in face, though grown stouter and more matronly in figure. She is rather short and thick-set, but not in the least ungainly. May I confess she was glad to see me ? I do confess, because though I never loved her or thought of her more than as a kind and agreeable little friend, I was always convinced that a deep-seated affection existed between us. She showed

me all her house. It is in two parts, for her husband's brother and his family are joint owners, and when the old father died he divided the house in such a way as to make it impossible for either family to respect the other's preserves. Trinny's account of where she could and could not legally walk in her own house was most amusing. She is very quick-witted, and enjoys the fun of the situation eternally. Her husband was from home, and her only boy away at school, so I missed seeing them both. She has lost two children, has been married ten years, and is forty-one. These figures reversed give a better idea of her face, which is a most unusual statement to make of any Spanish woman. I put in most of the afternoon nursing and playing with twin babies—boy and girl—her brother-in-law's children. We had a meal, and drank white spirit which I had taken care to bring with me. Altogether it was a clean and blessed time. I had never kissed Trinny, but when we came away, as she kissed Paco I thought I might have one, so I kissed her on the forehead. I felt her tremble terribly, and she looked frightened when I let her go ; but that was only Spain, the woman did not mind. And now I have left her, a link, a strong link to a bright and rare bit of life I lived here in the long ago. I could not ignore her. I have no wish to forget her. I never shall. She told me she was very poor, but she had a kind man for mate and a beautiful boy, and was content. That is much.

As we went homewards the hills and the mountains blended into one tone of deep copper, and the vales beneath them were streaked with lines of grey mist. The crown of the world was a rim of gold caused by the reflected light of the setting sun on the mountain-tops. Trinny's house was a little white ghost peeping out of the shadow of the great hill, and I? Well, I felt like a parchment ghost—cold and homeless in the evening air—out before my time, and going nowhere! I looked back many times and thought as often. No words will reveal what I thought—chiefly, I suppose, of the mystery of human life, of its comings and goings, of the labour and the pain, the loving and losing, and that unfailing force which impels us to move on and lose sight and grasp of what we have at one time or another deemed the best.

CHAPTER VII

GASTRONOMIA

AS this book deals largely with domestic life, it may be as well to devote a few words to Spanish fare. The Spaniards talk much of food, but eat little. They also say much in praise of wine, and remain the most abstemious people in the world. There is absolutely no drinking on the part of the well-to-do beyond their actual needs. At holiday times the very poor may, with the chance given then, drink to excess, but sobriety is virtually a religion with them. There is no vice so condemned or regarded with more shame than that of drinking. One sees the Moorish character in this distaste for drink; but if coffee were an intoxicant Spain would be a nation of drunkards, for café is consumed by all who can afford it. The quality is on the whole excellent, but in many provinces the beans are over-roasted and indigestion is promoted. In the extreme south, one gets excellent café for a real, with a penny to the waiter.

Tea is gaining ground there; many men take it in the cafés, and it has become the recognised thing at five o'clock in all houses with any pretensions to social form. Spain was one of the

first European countries to acquire the tea-drinking habit from the East, and in the seventeenth century she produced a rare lot of metal and other ware in the form of tea-services. But the tea habit did not last then, nor does it seem likely ever to be more than a fashion in Spain; the people cannot command the hot water, nor the instinct necessary to the making of a good pot of tea. There is nothing but goat's milk, and neither with lemon-juice nor beet-sugar can a decent cup of tea be secured. The natural conditions are against proper tea-making, and the perpetuation of the habit in Spain. Then tea is frightfully dear, the cheapest runs from four to five shillings a pound; and to buy a sealed packet of the genuine article runs to six or eight shillings a pound. Chocolate is taken as a thick stodge only, and in very small cups.

The food and feeding habits of the Spaniards are in nearly all ways distinct from those of the peoples further north. Excepting hotels, cafés, and the best private houses, there are neither tables nor chairs, but stools for sitting on and holding the dish. In town and country the common people frequently stand or crouch about whilst taking their meals. Then the food is served in one dish for all. I am here dealing with simple homes; but in what in England would be known as middle-class households, the food is often served in a single dish or bowl, with forks or spoons laid round. Knives are unnecessary, excepting to cut the bread, for should there by any chance be meat,

it will be cut up or picked to pieces by whoever serves the meal.

Most strangers imagine that Spain reeks of garlic. As a matter of fact the people of large parts of the country know nothing of this vegetable. And even where used, it is never to vulgarise the dish, or the consumer. For months I have travelled without tasting or scenting garlic, and I have been unable to obtain it when seeking it in large towns. In Granada, for example, I stayed in a thoroughly native fonda, where the cooking was varied and excellent, and the company drawn from several provinces of Spain. But no garlic was employed, and on my mentioning the fact at table, some commercial travellers were able to confirm my opinion that its virtues were far too little known, since to those who know how it should be prepared it is one of the most appetising things in the cuisine.

Spain is covered with sweet herbs ; not only thyme, sage, marjoram, rosemary, lavender, mints, and fennel, but scores besides of dainty little aromatic plants which yield a scent, flavour, or appetising quality to the otherwise plain fare of the land. Then it contains some native vegetables of substance—cardoon, fennel, seakale, asparagus, and dandelion, all of which are made the most of in their respective seasons. Quite a long chapter might be written on the dishes which are distinctive, as they are made from materials found in combination in no other part of Europe.

Nearly every province is famed for some dish, vegetable, fruit, or joint—the most notable in the form of hams and sausages. The salami is made in Spain, but is not the national sausage. That honour belongs to the chorizo, a little capsicum-red fellow, and usually with a mouldy exterior which makes him unattractive and costly to the uninitiated. But to those who know, age and shabbiness are everything. You cannot have a chorizo too old, if made of genuine materials. These consist of macerated lean and very old ham, and the fat of old ham which has been rubbed down with capsicum powder until it is of the consistency of cheese. Into this is worked some garlic-juice—not a flood, but a flavouring breath. Next, some peppercorns and one or two fragments of sweet herbs, drawn from the campo, are used. These things are well mixed and stuffed into stout skins, and if the best results are desired the chorizo is put into a jar and covered with boiling lard well impregnated with garlic, peppercorns, capsicum, and green rosemary. Thus prepared the chorizo is an immortal, and, like heavy wine, it improves with age. The best I ever tasted was twenty-seven years old. What one buys in an ordinary way are no more than a few months old, but even these youngsters are perfection to those who can accept Spanish fare for all and sufficient. Of course, the character of the meat and the method of preparation have all to do with the quality of the chorizo, but at its best it is the finest dainty of its kind to

be bought in Europe. You can use the chorizo with everything, and nothing seems quite perfect without it, especially boiled joints, soups, and made dishes. The chorizo, like the garlic, is not to be taken as a meal, but as the appetising item, to make every dish a blessing. And that word blessing reminds me that in Spain one is always hungry, and that it is the aroma and appetising properties of the chorizo which place it so high in one's estimation.

The things absent from Spain make one wonder what can be present to sustain its people. There is no such thing as a joint. The biggest piece of meat one is likely to see will be a baked kid, and this but rarely. The meat of the largest animals is cut and served in the tiniest pieces. Turkeys and fowls also are cut to bits and fried and stewed, and lost in the vegetable savoury which surrounds them. And the pig, ubiquitous in Spain, is never seen in the form of a boiled ham or a rasher of bacon. It is true that Granada is celebrated for its hams; very old and cooked in white wine which has been first delicately spiced. In fact, whole hams are not so treated, but small pieces, and these are obtainable only in the cook-shops and fondas. Then Spain has no pie of any sort. Nor is there a baked or boiled pudding, nor a cake, nor a tart, nor anything in the form of stewed fruit, a custard, or a substantial dish which we know as a "sweet."

Cabbage, and several other more or less sub-

stantial vegetables, have no place in Spanish fare. In a land without heavy fires, butter, or cow's milk there can be neither big joints, good pastry, nor light puddings, and the dearness of meat makes its general consumption practically impossible. The true meat of Spain is the olive and its oil, and next the bacalao or cod-fish, of which the Spaniards are large consumers. With a slow charcoal fire, a little oil, cod, a handful of rice, another of chick-peas, a remnant of bacon-fat, a thread of saffron, and a gota or tear-drop of garlic, a meal is secured for a family. In Spain no one tires of repetition. Here, if anywhere, Wordsworth's lines are true, for at table their whole vocation is endless imitation. Soup, similar soup, and even more similar soup is consumed the year round.

The stock ingredients of the Spanish kitchen are, so far as the common people are concerned, very inferior beef and mutton, goat's flesh, bacon-fat, seasoned lard, sausages, cod-fish, eggs, oil, and, on the coast, fresh fish. Vegetables—chick-peas, rice, potatoes, pumpkins, egg-plant, tomatoes, giant radishes, artichokes, cucumbers, cardoons, onions, asparagus, olives. The flavourings—saffron, garlic, and capsicum, one or other of these present in every dish. The capsicum is used everywhere. In the north the fruits are like our own, though of inferior quality, and in the south and east, melons, oranges, grapes, pomegranates, dates, olives, and prickly pears are largely consumed. The national drink is wine, and the pick-

me-up aguardiente—white spirit—a crude form of absinthe but more wholesome, and doing no harm to the Spaniards, as they drink with such moderation. Their sweets are coils of batter fried in oil, rice boiled in goat's milk, meringues of sugar, and dainty little biscuits. Their quince and fig breads, made from the pulp of these fruits and pressed hard as cheese, are very nice, but too dear to fall to the lot of the common people. Spanish bread is everywhere good but dear, and soup is often obtainable where bread is impossible. Globe artichokes, the outer petals removed, and the cores steamed with an onion and served with thin mayonnaise, are, so far as I have tasted, at their best. Baked kid or lamb in macerated kidney gravy, thick, and a rich brown colour, makes a dish to dissipate all idea of dying. The puzzle is to find the contents of this gravy!

As cooks the Spanish poor have not received their proper share of praise. They have a real faculty for cooking, knowing, as by instinct, what things and proportions will blend and make an appetising meal. From end to end of Spain I have never detected anything I might regard as stupid, wasteful, or badly done. I have growled within—for it is useless to complain out loud—at the hours on hours which I have waited, but I never could discern that any more might have been made of the material composing the dish. This is a rare statement, and, excepting the French, could be truly said of no other people in Europe.

The asparagus, natural to Spain, grows no thicker than a rush in its wild state. It is so unsubstantial as to be included in many proverbs and couplets. One of the best known of these runs :

He who eats medlars, drinks beer, sucks asparagus, and kisses an old woman—
Neither eats, drinks, sucks, nor kisses.

These are known to be unsubstantial things. The thin green asparagus, fried in oil and then rolled in egg-batter, makes a most tasty omelette, and is a dish prized by every Spaniard. Once entering a village with three or four stalks of asparagus, I offered them to a tiny girl who was sitting on a doorstep. She took them, and thanking me said, with great deliberation, " This is well, señor ! But where is the egg ? "

When one goes into a Spanish comedor, the waiter calls to the cook, " One breakfast for a real gentleman." This means special cooking for each individual, and nothing stale, dry, or cold. And in parenthesis it is never hot—nor should it be. I have never seen steam escaping from anything in Spain—for which I'm inclined to say, thank God ! For of all things raised and praised by man, I dislike most his steam, especially when it hangs about his food. England produces some excellent fare, but it is too often a vulgar sight, and as regularly dangerous in its consequences. Man doesn't want hot food—scalding hot, steaming hot food—in order to get the best of health and the joy of life. In Spain the whole business of man is

to keep cool, where in England it is to keep hot and blow it !

Nearly all Spaniards take deep draughts of crystal-clear water before and with their food. They also have a less rational habit of " cleaning the mouth " with a cigarette between the courses. This does not offend the women folk, for unless they are travellers they rarely, if ever, sit down with the men—a boy of ten having more right to the table than a woman of any age. The Spaniards eat and drink very slowly, as if bent on killing rather than improving time, and it is an odd fact that the peasants eat and drink with far more grace than their richer relations. The fingers are used alike by rich and poor in carrying food to the mouth, and where knives are employed, as they are in the north and west, they are poked into the mouth as readily as any other table article. In the highest society food is handled a great deal, and it is a mark of attention to be fed from the fingers.

The domestic habits are primitive rather than objectionable. The toothpicks of southern Spain are often made from petroleum cases, because the wood splits well ! Result, one finishes the meal with a taste of lamp-oil in nose or mouth. I'm an uncultivated dog because I don't like the flavour or the " perfume." The Spaniards do !

In Spain it is vulgar to leave anything on one's plate, and in taking fried eggs it is customary to mop up the yolks with bread held in the fingers. Using a knife and fork, a waiter looking at me

inquired cynically, "Are there no eggs in your country?" "Oh, yes." "I thought there were not, by the mess you are making of that one."

The two-meal system would answer well enough if the food were abundant and served punctually. But these advantages are never found together; hours for breakfast and dinner cover the whole range of the clock. And one is always deceived, for Spanish cooks will promise anything. On asking when you may have a meal they reply, "When you wish." Should you say, "Well, I'll have my breakfast at ten," you have done nothing more than waste words and invite disappointment, nor would the choice of another hour be any better. I have often had my breakfast so late as to think it an early dinner, and my dinner so far into the night as to regard it as an early breakfast. On this subject I confess to have lost patience. The Spaniards cannot conceive any difference between early and late, punctual or unpunctual meals.

In domestic, as in other affairs, there is no concern for time nor sense of order in work. The church bells, the appearance of certain hawkers, or more or less regular passers-by, provide a rude clock. And in the matter of a meal, well, you will be told when it is ready. The patience of the men is extraordinary; in fact, no one could imagine such patience in a hungry and independent soul, and the Spaniard is both. Men will enter an eating-house and say, "When can we have a meal?" and the housekeeper replies, "At this moment." The

men will sit, talk, and look round, roll and exchange cigarettes, and start subject after subject, putting in two or three solid hours, and never show signs of impatience or utter a word to urge the housekeeper or complain in any way. I have seen this scores of times, and have been the victim as often myself. And by way of exception I have heard but one man complain, and he a commercial traveller who had to think about trains. On going into a new house one may ask for mere form's sake, "When are the meal times?" to be met with, "When you please." And supposing you say, "Well, breakfast at ten, dinner at six," the señora agrees with evident delight. But that is nothing. Something has to be said, so why not agree with the señor! At ten there will be no breakfast, nor at eleven; there may be at one, but it is more likely to be at two. And if you complain you are silenced with the inquiry, "What is the difference?" Argue, abuse, condemn, threaten to leave, and do so, you will make no change in that establishment or find it different in the next. Our cooks are always in a fume; a Spanish cook is as imperturbable as an oyster, and enters on the task of cooking for twenty with no more concern than if there were but one.

The Spaniards are shockingly under-fed, and where they get enough in quantity it is often of an unsubstantial nature. It is to this shortness of fare that one must look to their attitude towards eating and drinking. Nationally there is never

enough, and the greater number are perpetually on short commons. And this is no new situation ; it has existed for centuries, and there is no evidence to encourage the hope that there can be any lasting improvement. Out of all this long-lived poverty has arisen a sort of philosophic restraint, and a positive repugnance to complaining or even to feeling such an absurd thing as hunger. To want food is a sign of the lowest vulgarity ; to boast of a superfluity where there is none, is a sign of good breeding, and be sure the Spaniard would be well-bred. Thus one sees only the poorest peasant and the tramp plead for food, or express the fact that he is hungry. In the crowd all are well off. It would be lowering to hint at poverty, it would be a mistake not to mention that the excess of good fare makes life a burden ! As outsiders we discern and laugh at this boast, but only for a time, for we come to see that there is wisdom in boasting. It is justified by the calm and the simplicity it gives to life. " Busy " people almost hate the Spaniard for his sublime indifference, whilst if he had steam he would hate them for their mad concern. He will not have any concern. He says, " Todas es mismo "—all is the same. He is nearer to China in his thoughts and attitude towards life than the Frenchman or Englishman who are at his elbow.

CHAPTER VIII

AT SEVILLE FAIR

I ARRIVED at Seville on the Sunday terminating Semana Santa—Holy Week—and the opening day of the Great Fair. Shall I say that the town was merely crowded, when I mean that it was jammed, packed, overwhelmed, with a noisy and animated humanity? The religious functions had failed completely, owing to the excessive rains and cold weather, scaring those in authority and responsible for the precious robes and vestments, and all the coloured and bejewelled splendour which is usually carried through the streets at this season; but to-day it is fine and warm, and a corrida—bull-fight—is about to mark the passing of Semana Santa and the commencement of the Fair. Ere I reach the great national playground, let me say that to live in Seville in these Fair days costs money. A proclamation announces that begging is not permitted at this season, and the residents of Seville are called upon to show all the hospitality within their power to the visitor and stranger within their gates; but there is no word to the effect that normal charges only are to be made at the

rest-houses and hotels. I was asked about twelve shillings and sixpence for a very third-rate room and two meals a day, and given a hint that there would be extras (not for me, but in the bill). I dislike extras. We all do, for we never know what they are, or if they are necessary and an advantage. Catching the eye of an official at the General Post Office, I asked him of a good casa de huespedes—a native lodging-house. He said, without a moment's hesitation, "Do you want the best bed in Seville?" "Yes, if it's not too dear." Then he signed to me, and I followed him across the beautiful old patio or hollow square of the post office. He led to where a woman sat at a door sewing, and to her explained my wants. "A dollar and a half is the price of my bed," said she, and the gaily garbed official immediately said "cheap." I immediately said "dear." Then the pair wanted to habla—talk. But it was no use. Expressive glances convinced me that I was regarded as a "lamb," so I returned to the street; here a boy literally took me by the hand, and with a most paternal gesture led me to a casa de huespedes in the Calle Venera. I am glad I did not resist the boy. At normal seasons this house takes in all who call with money and who will pay at the rate of five pesetas, or about three shillings and sixpence a day; but now it doubles its charges, and so I am, I trust, safely lodged in Seville at seven shillings a day.

I made the bargain before seeing the room I

was to occupy, at which I laughed out loud, and then fell to abusing myself for my credulity. I have slept in some queer quarters, and often where there were no walls to make quarters, but in no case had I seen a bed in a place like this. This Seville room is about ten by six feet. No two walls are parallel; the floor slopes as if it had once been a roof; the ceiling is nowhere six feet high, and it roams about as if looking for the easiest place to flop down and crush one. The window is quite tiny, and looks out upon a blank wall which is not four feet away. I was led to expect a curious chamber by the way I got to it, for the house, narrow in the extreme on the ground floor, wound upwards in corkscrew fashion, and I am certain that it rests here and there, sits down, so to speak, on other houses, as a means of supporting its six rickety stories. I was amused and disgusted, and my disgust determined me to make a row and, if possible, beat down the terms of the posadera. She was a woman of a most agreeable countenance and very kindly eyes, which made it all the harder; but I had no difficulty in abusing my room. She valued it at three pesetas a day, and this was her answer to my complaint: "We have to wash the room before and after you. We have to sit up and open the door to you when you come home late. We have to give you time to speak and to think about your comfort. We are taking the place of your mother and all your family and friends, and for

this you—a gentleman—begrudge giving three pesetas." Then, with all the pride and mock heroics of her race : " This is no place for robbers " (implying I should be safe) ; " this is no place for the poor ; this is no place for other than caballero—gentlemen—this is the house of perfection. What more do you want for three little pesetas ? " And then, oh, undying universal touch, she sighed, " Ay, di-mi, I am a widow ! " and with her white apron wiped away my last chance of arguing further.

Proud of her victory, the widow Perez was as good as her boast, and cared for me extremely well ; and if any one of small means and desirous of living the simple Spanish life should go to Seville, he or she may find it at La Sevillana, Venera.

In point of national display, solid business, and whole-hearted enthusiasm, Seville Fair takes first place in Europe. This is due to the fact that Spain has by far the most primitive everyday existence, and is the most anxious to preserve her mediæval forms of trading, ceremony, and jubilation. She is not composed of one common and familiar race, but of many, and all as strange as so many groups of foreigners, and the fascination of the unknown and the unlike leads to the making of a festival as cosmopolitan and spirited as any one could possibly desire. That nothing shall be wanting to make this a truly national gathering, the hat has been passed round from

province to province, and private donors, various societies, and clubs have contributed. The mayor and corporation of the city of Seville have voted large sums for the improvement of the Fair-ground, for the illuminating and decorating of streets, and have paid no less than fifteen hundred pounds to railway companies for the carriage of costumed bands from the various provinces and centres of old-fashioned life. These regiones, as they are called, are the great public attraction of the Fair, since they exhibit and delight the heart of Spain, and young and old of every station and estate are carried away by the singing of the quaint old songs, couplets and historyettas, and the dancing to different times and tunes.

Each group is made up of men and women, and none are very young, for it takes time to comprehend and interpret the subtleties of the Spanish song and dance. But one thing is unmistakable—all look and play their part. The dresses are charming, but they never hide the singer or the dancer. Spaniards have the most expressive faces, and these rude country-folk—who not a week ago were farmers and grain-millers in Leon ; vine-dressers in La Mancha ; muleteers and water-carriers in Arragon ; goat-herds in the Castilles ; fishers from the coast of Catalonia or Valencia ; nomadic shepherds and esparto gatherers from the southern mountains ; raisin and orange growers from Malaga ; oliveros from Granada ; or a troupe of merry men and

women from the cork forests round Cadiz, plain, working, peasant-folk as they all are—go through their performances with such precision and finish as to lead one to doubt whether they have ever done aught but sing, dance, make jokes and elaborate gestures, and generally entertain their fellow-countrymen.

Prizes are given to the most picturesque and accomplished among them, and here we may see Spanish national dancing in all its forms. They usually take the name of the province which originated them ; thus there is the Arragonessa—commonly named the Jota. It may not be described, but it is probably the most proud and stately dance of all. The Malaguena is the dance of Malaga ; the Gaditana, that of Cadiz ; the Manchego, that of La Mancha ; and the Sevillana, that of Seville. The Bolero is said to have its home in Leon, but it has long been danced in many regions of Spain. The Murciana is the dance of Murcia ; and the Valenciana and Catalana proclaim their places of origin. The Flamenca is a wild, hot-blooded dance of the south, in imitation of a dance of the Flemings, of which word Flamenca is a corruption. El Vito and the Jonda are types of Andaluz. The Tango is the lowest form of dance, a kind of khan-khan, or hop-and-kick affair without any special time or pose. These pretty well exhaust what we may hope to see in Spain to-day, and here at this Fair none but the best performers are on view.

The Fair-ground is practically a mile square. Within the city lies a large open space margined on one side by extensive and beautiful park-like public gardens; next is the fashionable promenade and drive of La Delicias which follows the storied stream of the Wad-el-ke-veer—written as pronounced. These three spaces form the site of the Fair, though the whole city is *en fete*, and all the streets and roads bordering or leading to the central point vie with each other in producing the greatest show and the biggest crowd. Counting the houses of wood and canvas which have been erected specially for this festival, as well as those which are within the Fair zone, there must be fully thirty miles of streets new and strange. No other people go so far in the use of bunting, greenery, and such material as will put a new face on the fronts of their dear old houses. Everything that the house holds in the way of colour and bravery is hung outside, and where paint, whitewash, coloured papers, and flowers in many hands would be weak gauds, they become in those of a Spaniard veritable triumphs in the way of decoration and general effect. The powers that be have laid out the site as if for a permanent town, and all the streets and footpaths are properly formed and laid with a warm, brownish yellow sand which agrees excellently with the buildings and the general display of colour. Gardens have been made months in advance, and to-day are beautiful with masses of roses, gera-

niums, blue cornflowers, carnations, and mignonette, whilst climbing plants in pots and tubs appear by the thousand. Whoever can afford it has a caseta, or private house, at the Fair. These are perfectly appointed little houses of reception and merriment ; this year there must be miles of them, each numbered and generally ordered as if it were meant to last a century rather than a week. One gets Spanish history at all points here. Every type of house, ancient and modern, is to be seen in miniature in these casetas. Various clubs and societies have quite palatial buildings, with spacious ball-rooms, promenades, and all the dainty luxurious appointments so beloved by the Spaniard.

The people bent on doing business are a vast army, and are from every part of the Peninsula. Thousands of horses, mules, and donkeys are on exhibition, and each in turn is haggled over in such fashion as to cause a bargain in the making to be one of the sights and best bits of fun of the Fair. Spanish mules are famous the world over, and here one sees the best of their kind.

The mule-dealers are wild, picturesque-looking men, with any amount of character in their dress and bearing. This they somehow convey to their animals, for the mules are clipped, curled, and even shaved in the most fanciful fashion, and have ornaments of wool and plaited straw about their heads and tails which make them look quaint and old-fashioned in the extreme. There

are gypsies, of course, in thousands, but they have lost much of their old-time appearance and fascination. European gypsies of to-day live too near to the great centres of civilisation. One does not see the native wild expression any more. It has given place to a city-bred type of cunning which is repellent rather than attractive.

Spain never had many toys of her own. Here the toys must run to scores of tons. Over one hundred and fifty toy-shops are arranged in a straight and unbroken line. Most of the things come from Germany, France, and America, and few but are common and without interest. Spain contributes fans, beads in great variety, garter buckles—as emblems of fidelity—models of all her utensils and implements, castanets and strings of bells, ribbons, sashes and handkerchiefs as souvenirs of the Fair, as well as a great many models of the peasants and their costumes.

Of foodstuff there is no end—its odours fill the air. There are such things as national odours, the outcome of climate, food, cooking, and the manner of eating and drinking. The odour of the Spanish crowd is pronounced but agreeable, and at the Fair the semi open-air kitchens create the feeling of abundance and comfort. Every one is eating something, for pine-kernels, various nuts and sweetmeats, olives, figs, almonds, raisins, and fresh fruit are desired by all. The local country-folk may be easily detected by their pillow-cases of food. They stroll about with bag and baggage

all complete, having heavy coats, rugs or squares of sackcloth, and a supply of food which enables them to squat down, eat, sleep, and be at home in any part of the Fair. Those who are sleeping in the open air without tent or awning of any kind must run to thousands, and this great national gathering is marred for want of sanitary arrangements, for the authorities do not recognise any form of indecency as a nuisance, and there is no water as a means of cleansing and sweetening the many thousands who live entirely on the Fair-ground. The costumes and accoutrements are of unending interest, and carry one over centuries of eventful time. The men are ever more old-fashioned than the women, and wear garments and head-gear which can be traced to other and far-off lands. Thus there is the montero, or helmet-shaped sheepskin hat, which is said to have its origin in early Greece, and the curiously small-topped and wide-brimmed sombrero, which in some unknown way came from ancient Thessaly, and is now worn by the picador in his bouts with the Andalusian bulls. The jackets, breeches, and vestments are of silk, cotton, plush, velvet, and cord, and the dominating colours violet, yellow, purple, green, and brown. The quaintness of design and the amount of ingenuity and patience displayed in these hand-made garments is past description, but one never tires of looking at and admiring the variety of the crowd. Blood and gold the Spaniards call their flag, and the colours are everywhere.

Scores of miles of ribbons, flags, and streamers of these colours are flying in the air or decorating the festive band. Under all this show of bravery old Spain is aroused to her utmost ; the national spirit is awake, so that every one seems bent on being generous and having a royal time, and there is no class but comes and throws in its lot with the rest. The highest of the aristocracy, the most beautiful women and gallant and elegant men join the crowd and take all things in common. There is a set programme of events for each day, but, as usual, the most delightful and lasting features are the unrehearsed. Jugglers, tricksters, singers, and story-tellers—this last an almost unique survival in Spain—meet one at every turn, and, strangest feature of all, there is neither night nor day, but one unbroken round of half-Oriental merriment. True, the serious side of life is seen in the faces of many of the stall-holders and continuously-worked servants and directors of the show ; but even these must enjoy the wild jousts now and then, and by turns the Fair comes home to each and all as the time of a life ; and further proof, if it were needed, that Spain is what all her people truly believe her to be, the richest and most splendid country in the world ! The bands are all doing their best to drown the roaring and bell and clapper-clanging of the showmen, and the crowds are shrieking that they too may be heard. The spaces round the platforms assigned to the regiones are crowded

with shouting, applauding, and wildly-excited humanity, for here rush out like fiery torrents the passionate songs and aspirations of the lover of the warm south. There is magic in the click and squirl of castanets, and the rattle and stamp of nimble feet. Here is gesture, which is understood of all the world. Here is a singer interpreting the lover's exquisite pain; and here a soul sighing audibly in the tremulous voice of a mandoline. So that one is fired and calmed and made almost sorrowful by turns; one grows weary, longs to escape, and counts it a blessing that all days are not for merry-making, and that when all is seen, said, and done, the supreme joy of life is not found in crowds, but in quietness.

CHAPTER IX

IN COLD AND WARM QUARTERS

DURING a spell of intensely cold weather I went in a train, that was as open and perishing as a cattle truck, from Alcazar San Juan to Albacete—eighty miles of flat, open, and bare highlands. Here and there a small town or village community struggles with a bit of churlish soil yielding wheat or wine, but in no place is there a sign of sufficient creature comforts.

Pastores—shepherds—and cabreros—goatherds—roam the country, staying out for weeks or months with their flocks, folding them at night and during rough weather in corals—walled enclosures—against wolves, lynxes, and other beasts of prey.

These, like the rest of the peons del campo—or nomadic countrymen—are the most wildly picturesque class of people to be met with in Spain. They are always a mixture of leather, cord, raw hide, velvet, plush, cotton, and esparto grass, and all so reduced to tatters, or merged in each other and the wearer, that any attempt at accurate description must surely fail.

Cold and hunger suppress the vanities, and the

main concern is to be protected against the long season of hard weather.

Albacete is probably the most colourless town and province of Spain. The inhabitants are robust, hardy, and remarkably quiet, employing few gestures and no loud speech. Their town is poor to meanness. It has no fine or interesting building, excepting the large church of San Juan, which, almost square in form, has its roof supported by two columns only.

Albacete is famous for its pocket and flaying knives. These are crude but useful articles, made by men and boys who sit in porches and more open places, working the steel and horn parts by hand, and making up each weapon without any outside assistance. The town promised to be lively, for at the station I was met by about a dozen men with their breasts and loins girt about with blades. They carry their wares in curiously-fashioned wallets of lynx-skin spread over their foreparts. Beside a shop door two domestic white rabbits were suspended by a cord tied round their hind legs. Every one who went by either tested their weight or inquired the price, but no one seemed to pity the poor little creatures hanging head downwards in the horribly cold weather.

During a walk I was accosted by a man who was garbed solely in leather and rags, and had for his business the hawking of two lynx skins, soft and gory, which he said would make me a splendid waistcoat. Whilst I was debating with the lynx-

hunter, a man came up who struck me as wonderfully like myself. He had a wooden leg; at sight of this I laughed quietly, as I had often been told that nothing less than a wooden leg would ever keep me at home.

Many dug-out dwellings are to be seen here in the form of tunnels and pigeon-hole excavations in the sandstone, soft limestone, and masses of clay, which form natural hummocks around the town. Beaver-like mounds are to be seen by the score projecting above the dug-outs. These are the chimneys; and as the cold was intense, boys who had no fire at home were sitting on the mounds with their legs down the chimneys.

Albacete is the centre of the saffron industry, thousands of acres being devoted to the cultivation of the crocus whose stamens provide the saffron of commerce. The flowers appear in autumn, and the plucked stamens are laid to dry on smooth earth floors, and covered if necessary against wind and rain. The saffron is a very old industry of Spain. Apart from flavouring and colouring, saffron is grown largely for the production of laudanum. The growers sell the saffron at from twenty to thirty English shillings per pound. The crop equals about twenty pounds per acre, but an enormous amount of patient labour is involved, and the saffron must be classed as a peasant industry. As the Spaniards say, "only the patient and the poor" can be satisfied with it.

The country eastward of Albacete is high, wind-swept, and very poor. Little patches of native pine nestle in some of the ravines and on protected hill-sides; and there are a few strongly built villages and the sky-kissing castle of Los Llanôs to engage one till the Segura is reached—a blood-red river which boils, and turns, and tumbles, through gorges and amid hills of leaden grey and reddish brown. The descent is so rapid that the climate changes within an hour from raw winter to hot summer. I left Albacete wearing practically all I possessed—about three complete suits, and on arriving at Hellin I was so faint with the heat that I had to get assistance to unload my burden of clothes.

The vega or vale of Murcia is renowned throughout Spain for its richness and beauty. Carefully examined it is wealthy by contrast, for the rich land is but fifteen by nine miles, and the surrounding area is made up of absolutely bare and unprofitable hills and mountains. The vale is treated as a market-garden—fruit trees, the mulberry for silk, and flowers and vegetables crowding every inch of space. The thrift and skill of these people are equally splendid, and it is a hard fact that with all their toil they never get far beyond the reach of poverty. The vegetables grown are on the whole old-fashioned and poor types, but their violets and oranges are unsurpassed by those of any province in Europe. Murcia violets are sent to Madrid and to Paris; but the choicest oranges

are consumed within the country—the "Imperial" orange is in all respects a splendid fruit. Of medium size only, but of surpassing flavour.

So valuable is land, and so enterprising are the Murcians, that one cannot easily obtain a good walk. The huerta or garden is all dykes, ditches, heaps of manure and drift-sand, cesspits, pigs, poultry, tiny adobe and thatched cots, trellises and trees—a confused tangle, which makes a paseo more fatiguing than refreshing. The whole area is subject to flooding, and the making and maintenance of roads presents a perpetual problem.

Raw silk is produced here in large quantities, and the white mulberry is trained as a high standard tree, so that fruits, vegetables, flower, and farm crops may be grown beneath it.

This is the spring season, and the time for cleaning all the wells and flood conduits of Murcia. The silt and black mud fill the narrow streets to the extent of tens of thousands of tons.

A town guard says gravely that the work is done at this season because the people of the vega want manure! And he vows that nothing else would stimulate to all this labour, mess and pollution. Luckily, these wells provide only house water, and I am glad to be shown that the water used at table and for washing costs about a farthing a gallon, and is brought to the house every day in enormous jars, which are filled from a spring in the hills. The Spaniards are among the few European peoples who know how to conserve

and guard drinking water. They seek it direct from the rock, and avoid the possibility of contamination till it is safe in the pitcher.

Around Murcia the andado or cradle is a wicker-work bell-shaped contrivance, which, broadest at its base, has small wooden rollers, so that whilst the baby is always safe it is amused in pushing the andado about and teaching itself to walk. Unlike the stiff and immovable stocks which fall to the lot of the babies of northern Spain, the cradle of the south is a very comfortable and pleasing contrivance, well worth imitating by other countries. As no community can be sensible in all things, the Murcians sling up their draught animals when fitting them with shoes. Outside the farriers' shop are four heavy posts arranged like a byre. Into this the horse, mule, or donkey is led, and by means of belts, straps, and levers is hoisted into the air. What follows is a sort of tragi-comedy, for the animals are always frantic, whilst the people consider the matter as a desperate and necessary joke. Where an animal is known to be trustworthy, two men may undertake to shoe it, one holding the hoof whilst the other prepares it and fixes the shoe.

The clay vessels for holding the water, wine, oil, and drysaltery of this region are still made on Greek and Roman models, and the forms are nearly all perfect. There is also the Eastern type of pitcher, with a pointed base, intended to rest in a frame or cavity of the wall. The street carts, laden

with these picturesque ewers, pitchers, and jars, and the quaint fittings of the houses, are primitive and interesting in the extreme. In a small farm-house were three tenajas, or immense, almost-round jars, forming one side of the kitchen. They were of splendid design, and made of the finest glazed terra-cotta ; they looked hard and durable as copper or red marble.

The Segura river makes two leaps within the heart of Murcia, and boils and thunders along with an unceasing roar.

The women of Murcia are undeniably beautiful, and the poorer and shopkeeping class furnish the best average. In some regions the well-to-do are the most beautiful ; in other parts it is the peasants ; and again, it may be the factory girl, the shop assistant or the employer's daughter. In this part of Spain the shopkeeping class have the largest share of physical beauty. Eyes, hair, teeth, and skin are often perfectly enchanting.

Like most Spaniards, the Murcianas grow fat early, from too much sitting about. But certain charms seem to increase rather than diminish with age. The eyes of the elderly women are often more attractive than those of their daughters or grandchildren ; this may be due to an increase of knowledge and the absence of any strain, for they do little or no reading, and tax their sight only in so far as they engage in fine sewing.

A large proportion of the Murcian women have

bright brown hair, and this obtains among all classes, and it is as common in the country as the town. This, with some other racial characteristics, leads one to believe that the Murcians represent a very old stock, for country types do not change so rapidly as do those of towns.

There is a gypsy type of woman in the road-side cottages round Murcia, who wears a large handkerchief over a shell-like coil of hair, tied curiously at the nape of the neck. She takes no end of pride in the coloured earthenware utensils which adorn her best chamber, but her especial vanity is a hand-worked towel, long and narrow as a scarf, which hangs from a specially made support high on the wall. An elegant hand-basin on an upright hand-wrought iron stand rests beneath. This is something like a discovery, for the care these women take to keep the water pure, and the towel spotless, leads one to infer that it is connected with some old superstition. No one is expected to use, or even dares to think of using, either water or towel, and there is a look of terror on the faces of parents and children alike should the stranger go near the toalla y agua.

The most pronounced defect of the Spanish woman is her harsh and uncultivated voice. Here in Murcia the impression produced by many is ruined the moment they speak. The voice is naturally good, and pure Castilian with the idioms of the provinces may be spoken with great charm ; but whispering and quiet speech are bad form in

Spain. One must speak to a distance. This strains and ruins many fine voices.

Then the singing of purely native song—and there is no knowledge of any other—demands a broken voice. Little girls and beautiful women often have voices as deep and harsh as their brothers. The rice powder, which literally coats the face of the Andalusian woman, and which she uses "to keep off the sun," is seldom seen in Murcia, though the climate is equally hot. The Spanish woman is a striking example of what may be accomplished in the way of securing regard without the exercise of much brain. The way she does her hair, uses her eyes, dresses, holds things, walks, and remains superbly feminine, more than compensates for her utter ignorance of what we know as education, and provides her with a power of commanding more than is enjoyed by the majority of her northern sisters.

It is hard to discover the difference between pride, fear, shyness, and sense of female honour in southern Spain. Women are most outspoken; no subject is barred, yet they will suddenly freeze into silence as if something terrible had been proposed. I accidentally touched the elbow of a young married woman. She had been unusually frank and agreeable, but at this she turned away and pouted like a sulky child. Then she went and spoke in the ear of a much older woman, and the pair walked off in silence. This is due to what we would hastily sum up as ignorance; but may be

more correctly explained as a subtle fear or mode of caution imposed upon them by the men. And the man is equally hard to estimate, for whilst he is all eyes and jealousy, he affects contempt for women and is never detected in a serious conversation. It is true that the lover stands at the window or under it, and gesticulates and articulates for hours on hours—and as much through the day as the night—but as he does this sort of thing for years, he may get out all his laws and decrees during the calf period.

In Murcia the women dress their hair even better than do many in Andalusia, and nothing more need be said. Here one sees marvellously perfect and effective arrangements, and women who visit this part of the country must be exasperated to know that the best professional peinadoras (hair-dressers) will attend daily for four pesetas, or about three shillings a month. Those who cannot afford a penny a day, dress each other's hair. Many young girls look charming by having their hair parted low on one side and waved over the forehead—a soft billowy mass, dry, yet not a hair out of place. Over the crowns of the head stretch wide black silk bands, with large rosettes just above or behind each ear. This does not age, but gives a fine character to the young faces, and surpasses anything of the kind I remember to have seen.

The short-frocked girls here wear full round knickerbockers tied below the knee with coarse white cords, from which depend large tassels.

The old-fashioned dress of the Murcia men is a shawl and petticoat, so that at a little distance they are indistinguishable from women. The manta, or shawl, is an exaggerated neck wrap, and has become more of a mode than a comforter. It is twisted round and round the neck and head, and under the arms, and brought over and across, tucked and curled, in a quite extraordinary fashion ; yet the wearer may be barefoot or wearing nothing more comforting than grass slippers.

The manta is often of barbaric colouring, and reveals association with Africa and Asia. Imitation leopard and tiger skins are much worn, and there are strips and stripes of felt, leather, and horse-cloth sewn together, much as one sees in Morocco, Egypt, and the Levant. Apart from the manta, and an occasional lynx-skin cap, the dress of the men is singularly plain. Nearly all wear a long black or cream linen blouse, with little or no fancy stitching, the same cut as that of a Paris workman. Pimento—the red capsicum—is grown here in great quantities, and large mills are employed the year round in grinding the dried fruit into powder. This industry is so large that it imposes the colour of the pimento red upon the whole population. Slippers, shoes, stockings, handkerchiefs are dyed to the same shade ; and so much of it is about that one does not find time to detect who is wearing the artificially dyed garments and who is a genuine worker at the mills. The market-folk are surprisingly quiet, and do not use their eyes

or gesticulate in the ways common to most Spaniards. In fact, the Murcians stand stock still before their wares, or crawl round under immense burdens of provender, and seem afraid to open their mouths lest they should have to close them on a bad bargain. One boy was so venturesome as to bawl, "Garlic, a penny a bunch. Come now, do you want more for less?" It was a fair argument.

Nearly all the houses have flat roofs, and the fowls have these as their particular and private domain; in Castilian the word "particular" means private. One sees birds perched on every bit of battlement and roof ornament, and very quaint they look, peering wisely down upon the human crowd.

The tartana, a long low van with a heavy, richly glazed and bright brown tilt, is the fashionable conveyance of this region. It is found a little further south and runs north to Catalunia, but is never seen far inland.

As a family coach it is most accommodating, but only those near the ends can see out of it or get a breath of fresh air. Truly superb horses draw these tartanas, and the animals have their manes parted and trained to fall on both sides of the neck, with very fine effect. Although so small, this town sports upwards of three hundred carriages—loaded from the shafts to the back steps. Every afternoon the visitor can be interested and amused in watching young love at play.

Youths of wealth must always show their courage, "monte"—on horseback—and wherever a family of pretty girls is huddled together in a tartana, a dozen horsemen are to be seen elbowing and jostling each other at the rear. Pushing and crowding is a crime in Spain—unless one is mounted, and then it is the correct thing to ride roughshod over everything and everybody. The ride over, and the ladies safely lodged in the houses, there is a great deal of racing up and down to attract faces to the windows. In a manner unknown in other European lands, love is the prime concern amongst Spaniards of all ages. They are curious and interested in every one's love affairs. No men or women are too old, nor are any too shy or busy to talk about and observe the progress of the grande passion. Hence one gets music as the confession of love in all places and seasons ; and in Murcia it is particularly well rendered.

At first this music is almost inaudible, and one wonders when the real playing will begin. This feeling is helped out by a peculiar hesitancy on the part of the player—he cannot find the right note or make up his mind how to interpret his feelings. He twangs the strings two, three, or all together, and then promptly stifles the sound by the pressure of his hand. He looks up to the window, down the street, over his shoulder, away at the sky, he hugs and he half rejects the instrument, and shakes at the shoulders. He speaks deep emotional words down in his chest, and tang and tinkle escape the

strings. Then his eyes close, he turns his head away from the guitar, and utters a plaintive appeal :

"Come to me awake as I know you in dreams,
Bright as the summer cloud, pure as fountain water";

or :

"Nor with thee, nor without thee
Have my troubles any remedy."

He is passionate, primitive, almost barbaric, but so convincing that one is made to feel rapturous by this lover who expresses himself to the music of south-eastern Spain.

Café life in some provinces is full of interest ; in Murcia it is extremely dull. The patrons are content with café and small talk. Taking Spain as a whole, the café has gone up in the world—it has grown sober and silent ; not that Spaniards ever drank to excess, but the café once provided all their diversion. Now cheap theatres, cinematograph shows, and most of all, " circulos " or clubs, have reduced the café to a rest-house, and no more.

Dancing, singing, and music, once so attractive and easily enjoyed, are now limited to a few distinctly low places, where they are neither national, nor natural, nor pretty, nor strange, nor have they—as Ford remarked—" the merit of being improper."

At the best café in Murcia a man of about fifty played the piano remarkably well. He had a splendid head and fine eyes, and I thought him too good for his task, he looked a man born to rule

and act in a great cause. One day I saw him led to his place by a youth, and I was made aware that my hero was totally blind.

In this little town there is a club which for beauty, comfort, and completeness can have few equals outside Spain. The Spaniards are past masters in the art of making sensible and successful club quarters. They provide baths, gymnasiums, gaming rooms of all kinds, cafés, smoking- and ball-rooms—every luxury and convenience of a club, except a library, for they do not believe in racking their brains. The principal club in Murcia has over six hundred members, and the whole secret of the success of this and all other Spanish clubs is that the members *pay monthly*.

Usually a duro—three-and-ninepence—and cash down for everything they consume or employ on the club premises. So one is able to say that the Spaniards are very careful in their pleasures and very careless in their business. The "Circulo Mercantil" of Malaga is the finest club I have seen, and I have examined many in detail in several countries. The Malaga Circulo has over two thousand members, and again its success is due to monthly subscriptions. The British may object that such clubs cannot be exclusive. No, they are not so; but it is well to observe that there is more general politeness and kindly support in the "Circulos" of Spain, than one is ever likely to discover in the most exclusive of British clubs. I make these remarks because it is evident that we

have a lot to learn in the way of providing a rational resort for men who must seek relaxation, and yet can make choice of nothing better than the public-house or theatre-bar. Excepting such cities as Barcelona and Madrid, which are largely supported by foreigners, Spain has no bars or mere drink shops.

The Spaniard enjoys company. He does not desire to drink unless he is thirsty. He does not ask his neighbours to drink, though he never fails to offer to the stranger whatsoever it is within his power to give. With an assured income, be it never so small, he joins a club, and but for the danger of his being led into gambling, he gains all he desires in the form of recreation at a very cheap rate.

I never was one for gaiety, nor can I recall a time or place which I thought dull. True, I knew some things almost to surfeit, but could always look or feel or hope away from what was about me or insufficient. I write this because Murcia is extremely quiet, and if I had not thought about it carefully I might instead have written dull. The average visitor would say, "there is nothing to see and nowhere to go," facts I will not dispute; but you cannot have eighty thousand human souls huddled within half a square mile with nothing to see or feel or think about. So I am just browsing, and in a pleasant way content to be here; and not without some definable reasons.

I am lodged in a poor but very clean household,

where I can study human life in variety. I should also say that I feel well off, which many with more money cannot feel, because they are incapable of surrounding themselves with proper company. I pay about half a crown a day, and the capacity to do this and not talk about where it is to come from, makes me a veritable monarch of wealth, worthy the love and devotion of all about me. I would not own money or anything which might make me envied of my fellows ; but I like to feel I am envied for myself, and as I stand there is nothing to be desired of me. Still, here the bread is very sweet, and the simple bed the lap of luxury.

I wish I could lay bare the secret of this ; but I cannot—to get the best of poor quarters and the absolute sympathy and attention of poor folk is somewhere near what I feel to be the most restful and joyous time in life ; that is, if we have sickened of the fawnings and insincerities of the crowd or felt the burden of toil-spent years. By paying a little more I could stay in a pretentious fonda, where I should feel poor, out of place, and a nuisance to every one whom I did not tip or tumble to. So one secret of being well off depends on living among those who are in some ways poorer than ourselves.

This is a highly organised community, and like Schopenhauer's family of porcupines, they are so closely huddled together that they must needs prick or irritate, turn, scratch, and bleed each other. I saw four half-tragic rows in less than an

hour—at least, I feared tragedy would happen, but all ended in words. Loud and furious speech pays almost every debt in Spain.

I had no sooner written this than my diminutive host came and invited me to witness the murder "funcion" round the corner.

Out of jealousy, a handsome young married woman had killed her maid. I asked what the punishment would be, and was told in all seriousness that the maid had paid the debt. The murderess might be formally charged, but as she took the only possible course open to her she was bound to be acquitted. The comic opera element was apparent in this case, for the murderess's husband was the State Attorney for the province, and alone held the power to issue a warrant for his wife's arrest; then he could not be suspended for any dereliction of duty without making a formal complaint against himself to the authorities at Madrid, and as he was not likely to do that, the public tongue was the only matter that moved in the vale of Murcia.

My life in this old city centres round two women —Manuela, my landlady, and Rosario, one of her lodgers. Manuela was a well-formed and clever-faced woman of about forty, and had for a marido, or husband, one Don Anisetto, who had the appearance of an ancient mouse, for he was grey, wizened, and about three feet and three stone. In all seriousness, he was a man small in every way, and possessed of a cunning and rapacity

he had not sufficient art to conceal. Manuela was more astute and had a better nature, though she, too, was greedy and abnormally jealous even for a Spaniard.

Rosario was a girl entirely without means and in such poor health that it was impossible for her to earn a living. A brother had paid a crown or so a week to keep a roof over her head ; but lately he had been drawn by the conscription, and Rosario was in a hopeless state of want. Apart from a pale and sad face, she was a beautiful girl ; about twenty-eight, of good height and fine figure ; her eyes, teeth, and hair were each and all perfect and bewitching. What is more, she had a rich, sweet voice and a very attractive wit.

A still more charming woman in the house was Teresa, a watchmaker's wife. She, too, was twenty-eight, had four children, and was a perfect example of Spanish beauty. Manuela watched me like forty cats, and after a day or two came out with—"Cual si gusto mas ?" (Whom do you like best?) Partly to avoid strife, and partly from instinctive choice, I named Rosario. "She is yours. I give her to you," came from Manuela ; but if not innocent I was indifferent to her offer. Rosario's fare consisted almost entirely of a potato or two, sliced and partly boiled, partly fried in a little water and oil. I saw this, and cudgelled my brains and wondered how I might assist her without attracting the notice of Manuela. The hostess' quarters were on the top floor, Rosario's on the

basement, mine were in the middle. I felt I could spare a few pesetas, so putting the money in an envelope I awaited Rosario on the stairs. When I pressed the packet into her hand, and she felt its contents, she almost fainted, and implored me by old-fashioned speech, gestures, and sighs not to rob her of her last shred of reputation.

She was in earnest, and her behaviour, as I saw it, was truly splendid. She was stupid, and yet she was right. She was a woman of Spain, and acting according to her lights. I withdrew to my room, feeling that I was a better-informed man. I had seen a woman at her best, and my heart went out to her. I had put my forefinger on my lips as a sign of silence, and she had understood. I went out and bought wine, biscuits, and chocolate, and rapping, put them at her door.

The next morning I was surprised to be met with a black scowl from Rosario when I saw her with Manuela. "Oh, dear," thought I, "when shall I know anything of the ways of women, and especially of these of Spain?" But later she gave me the kindest of glances, and I saw that the scowl was the protection against Manuela.

I provided afternoon tea for the household, solely that Rosario might get a little more food and company. Manuela enjoyed the "feasts," as she termed them, but she openly hated the inclusion of Rosario, and her jealousy was so pronounced that at times it made her quite ugly and miserable. As I was determined not to notice

these heart-burnings a new scheme was put in force.

Don Anisetto suddenly departed. He had "urgent business" in Cartagena, and after hugging me at the shoulders and shouting "Adios" up and down the street, he shouldered a bag as lean as himself and vanished.

Out of sight, out of mind! Manuela waited not an hour before making love to me. But I was a brute, and dilated on the charms and good qualities of Rosario. A bad cold laid me low; but Manuela proved a splendid nurse and had me right in next to no time. Teresa and Rosario were all sympathy, but being on the young side they dared not break through the law of custom, so I never saw them in my room, though they would twitter and call, as they held hands, like two shy children, in the doorway.

Manuela, finding me too senseless to fall in love with her, let Don Anisetto know that the finances did not improve by their keeping two homes, so back he came. Where he had been to, goodness only knows. Certainly not to Cartagena. I imagine he had been living in a sewer, or up in the belfry of the cathedral. He was all unshaven, unkempt, and unfed. He was pitiable, yet I laughed (I affected to do so with joy) at his return.

His little face had gone all to pieces during his few days "urgent business." Poor little devil, I do not think he had had one decent meal or wash all the time. Whatever he took in the bag

amounted to little, for it came back much as it went forth. The blackmailing *coup* had failed badly. I watched them with what I presume to call splendid indifference, and made all I could of Rosario, both before her face and behind her back.

In Castilian a green footpath is called a bereda. A more refined name for a narrow path or country track is senda, and one who takes it is named a peáton. In Spanish poetry the senda is known as "the little path of love." I did not take it, but I will own I often thought of the saying, and of the luna de miel or honeymoon of Spain, and still more of the German Flugende Wochen (flying weeks), which seem the most expressive of all. Rosario and I were peátons. I knew I should soon be gone. There was a rare joy in associating with this sweet, sad girl. All around were nothing but dykes, gardens, and orange groves; and Rosario and I went out into the fresh air and gathered oranges, and ate them too as often as we could induce Manuela and Teresa to accompany us, for it was unthinkable for us to go alone, even had she been twice the age of Manuela, and I but half the size of Don Anisetto.

St. Patrick is the patron saint of Murcia, and as the seventeenth of March meant holiday feasting and jubilating in true Spanish fashion—which means walking up and down and talking about manana (to-morrow)—I had a good chance to provide an additional feast for Rosario. Then we

went to the huerta, and though the day was lovely, and the world a paradise, she fainted, the walk and the joy of it were too much for her. With wine and such light food as I could buy I tried to sustain her, but I grew sad as I pondered over her fate. She had "friends" in Alicante, Valencia, or some town to the north. I was journeying in that direction. Could I help her? Laughingly she would say "Yes," but I never knew how far she trusted me. As a Spaniard I should say not very far.

One day when we were trespassing on a little estate, the rural guard, knowing I was a stranger, demanded my papers. At the sight of the word "Professor" he lifted his eyebrows, folded the paper, and handing it back said with quiet decision, "I have a brother a Professor—of dress-cutting!"

Coming home, we fell in with a painter who had been out sketching spring scenes, which he intended hawking and offering for a few pesetas each in the clubs and cafés of the town. He was a very interesting man, and amongst others made the remark, "It's fortunate that the painter works in heaven, for he lives in hell!"

I recall a most charming boy in Murcia. His parents lived on a floor below mine and were tenants of Manuela. This boy of four or five was beautifully formed, with a round but well-drawn face and great melting black eyes. Usually, when I was at meals, he would climb—for he was not

man enough to walk—up the steep stairs, and, arriving at the landing where the kitchen and dining crib were both open to him, for neither had a door, he would fall, fairly puffed, over the top step, and with his chin on the floor say, in the most august and fascinating tone, as if he were playing bear or bogey-man, "Buen provecho," or, May it do you good!

I always thanked him and asked him if he would share the meal, when he would thank me for my offer, and giving me a profound side bow, he would pass into the kitchen to borrow or return some utensil or scrap for his mother. Once I gave him a biscuit, and he sat in a high chair and ate it. As I left the room it was my turn to say "Buen provecho." He immediately wriggled down out of the chair and said with the calm and pose of a courtier, "Igualmenté"—The same to you—for I had just dined. Nothing could disturb or show this child in other than a splendid light.

He must have had a fine mother, but I never saw her. I often remarked to Manuela that he was a lovely boy, but she either showed signs of jealousy or went off on another tack. Once she paid him a scarcely accurate compliment when she said, "El es muy listo"—He is very sharp.

Manuela was in some ways a masterful woman, and positively grieved because she could not bring me to her feet. All she wished was that I should stay in Murcia and keep the house going, for she either affected to be, or was, very poor, and con-

sidered that an eccentric "Ingles" with a weakness for throwing money about must be retained at all hazards. She had travelled as far north as Paris, and as far south as Algiers. She knew a little French and some Arabic, had a real faculty for speaking, was splendidly domesticated, yet she could neither read nor write a single word in any tongue. So anxious was she to impress me that her slightest favours took this form. "I am going to oblige you." "I am obliging you." "I have obliged you." She was a real, if not in all ways attractive, character; and so I dwell upon her—though not in the same way that she dwelt on me! One day she brought home a jug of olives of extra poor quality, but amongst them one crescent-shaped little fellow, known through all the Mediterranean countries as the cuerno cabra, or goat's-horn.

I remarked to Manuela that this kind when well grown and preserved was the most favoured and the dearest of all olives. "Yes," she said; "I know, and that's why I bought *them* for you!"

Once I inquired for my table-napkin, and Manuela snapped, "Patience, it's washing day!" which shows that if poverty is no sin it is sometimes an inconvenience.

When it was decided that I should leave Murcia, great preparations were made to give me a proper send-off. Manuela named all her favourite cakes and other confections, and told me of the shops where they could be bought. Don Anisetto said

there must be a real burst or "buen cargo" of wine, and he went out and brought back bottles of three or four splendid brands. I found he bought or borrowed bottles only, and filled them from the remainder of my stock of common stuff in the kitchen. I looked at him as much as to say, "You're a daylight swindler," and he looked me full in the face as if to say, "Am I not a clever dog?" At least, I enjoyed some aspects of this house and its inmates; and among them Murcia has a fixed place in my memory. We toasted and wished each other good-bye, and "You will return, Sir Carlos," were the last words I heard from Rosario, as long after midnight she pressed my hand and passed down the dark stairs.

CHAPTER X

THE SEAT OF MARS

NEARLY all the country between Murcia and Cartagena is irretrievably sterile. I found a lodging at the fonda "La Piña," in the Calle del Aire—the first time I have observed Spaniards honour a house with that element. This is not intended for a guide-book, but I may say, for the benefit of those who do not know, that Cartagena was founded by Hasdrubal—from Carthage—as a rival and menace to Rome. It was used as a striking base after the first Punic War in which the Carthaginians in Sicily failed. From this New Carthage, Hannibal set out to end the dispute over Saguntum; thence taking the coastal route he passed into Gaul and on to Italy, intending to subdue Rome, In those times Cartagena had a much larger bay or harbour than at present. The old city stood on what was practically an island; but by reclamation and the silting-up of rivers and lagoons the water area has been greatly reduced. The surrounding hills which tower almost to the height of mountains, and also the site of Cartagena, are of very hard stone; but so much cutting and carving has been done that

little or nothing remains of the actual surfaces of early times. On the other hand, the outlying hills and their forts and farolas—lighthouses—are much as they were two thousand years ago. Nothing is discernible or discoverable of the first military builders. Digging yields nothing earlier than Roman. The situation is wonderfully strong. The mountain-girt harbour is still renowned, and it must have been even more impressive and impregnable in the days when galleys were the greatest ships of war. All the walls of rock are of the mighty kind. They are inscrutable, and in all seasons wear a hard steel-grey tone—the face of relentless war.

The T-shaped harbour within the narrow strait is not more than a mile or so in length or breadth, but is deep and rock-bound on every shore, and its waters are as blue, soft, and odourless as a fresh-water lake.

As a town, Cartagena shows few signs of age. Comparatively soft stone has been used, and repairs are so frequent and haphazard, that, whilst they produce colour and a cheap picturesqueness, they do not carry one to a remote past. The oldest and quaintest things in sight, apart from the many ruined towers and forts, are the windmills with six to eight triangular and boat-like canvas sails. They are used for hoisting water, and one may count sixteen or eighteen in a single direction.

At Cartagena one feels that the land has been

made solely for defence, and the sea for no more than ships of war. There is no sand or strand, no landing-places, little bays, calm coves, or any sign of a foothold for man. Any novelist wishing to develop a rugged hero should come under the influence of this grim spot.

One evening I stood at the very gate of this storied harbour and fortress, and saw the night fall upon land and sea.

Landwards were wonderful mounts of rock—fortresses terrible in their strength. The lower inland hills were in ruin, so many poundings and shakings had they received from little man. Over twenty ruined towers show from as many mouldering heights, and the city is sufficiently far off to look like the spirit of night rising out of the grey womb of the world. The composition of this picture is perfect ; it is an almost stupefying scene yet comprehensible ; and somehow it makes for peace of mind, and that sober gladness we know when isolated and alone. Here are the highest and most defiant of forts. Here the safest refuge close to the open sea. Here the beetling rocks defy further advance of the ocean, and though the waters look angry, the shores are dumb. The city sinks under a warm haze ; it is too tired to say good night, and there is not a sound. The air over the ocean breathes like a spirit, and far away across its leaden surface lies a low line of sullen blue—the night curtain running down on the African shore. The clouds above are in motion,

and as they move and change the pictures alter their size and character, seeming to cause the whole world to move silently towards the west.

A row-boat or two shoots into the strait. These, too, are silent, save for the thud of the oar in the rowlock. Short Tyrian boats these, with a curved blade prow-piece, no rudder, but a stern which runs into the water like a tail. The dark cavernous waters by the shore look alarming, but the tiny craft approach them with no sign of fear.

It is a coast without a river ; hence there are but few fish and these always close to shore, where the walls foster a little sustenance for the creatures of the deep. As the night descends, the air over the ocean becomes an audible voice—a kind of music, a dirge or descanting of the story of past years. I know for a moment the peace that is felt only at evening. Then a fisherman calls, and I am brought back to myself ; before I decide what to do a bugle speaks from a fortified height. This tells me to retire ; it is the end of day, and proclaims a season of quiet and rest.

But did I retire ? No ! I had leaned against the bulwark of rock which keeps the angriest wave from the blue haven. I stretched out my hands to make the grip more sure, for there is comfort in grasping at masses of rock which jar and throb under the pulse of the relentless sea. My hands were rugged and work-worn, pulled out of shape by years of toil in the service of a heedless and hungry world. Tears hot as fire welled up, as I

thought of my slavery days and the precious time I had lost.

I leaned further over the bulwark of stone, stretching panther-like, as if expecting some quarry to spring out of the darkening folds of the sea. I looked to right and left—to be frowned upon by piles of forbidding stone. I looked back now to the ghostly city, with here and there an eye that shed its fiery gleam across the waters. I turned again to the sea—it was peopled, and the numbers grew ! Ships I saw—ships of many forms, all unlike those of our time and clime.

How old are they ! Ships of early Greece. Ships of Phœnicia—from Tyre and Sidon, from classic Carthage ; and lo, there is one bearing Hannibal, that warrior and war lord. He comes hither to gird himself and march against Imperial Rome. So proud, so strong, so gay was this Carthaginian company, that I failed to notice the varied train which peopled the seas behind them. I was precipitated into the Roman wars, and though all about me was strange I was a willing soldier and unafraid. Half entranced, half asleep, I lay over the rock.

Not a soul or a sound disturbed me. I breathed out of ages on ages of time. I stayed till lost in the fathomless past, bound in the chains of time's story. I was alone with the stars and the sea, the rocks and the warriors of Carthage ; I was part of so many adventures as to feel indescribably old and averse to returning towards the few lights, which

shone out to remind me that Cartagena survived the rack and offered me a bed.

I took other walks, always to feel that the present did not count beyond providing time for contemplating the life of the past. The stern brutality of the place exercises a positive fascination. The rocks are like steel in their hardness and yield no sand. Where they are laved by the sea they are licked into such fine particles as allows one to say they dissolve into water. Their smooth inaccessible faces jut out into terrible depths. In the absence of land vegetation, nothing is provided for the growth of seaweed, and there is none.

The Spaniards, given to praise even the faults of their land, say here, "Sea without fish. Riverbeds without water. Country without soil. Women without shame."

Truly there is little for the virtues to thrive on. The sea makes no perceptible ebb and flow; and although there is a wealth of glorious colouring over all in sight, it is a churlish and brutalising line of coast. No corsair but would find this a fit home for his soul to live in; but to the landsman it offers nothing better than a spirit of opposition.

Everything stands off and refuses to be subdued and turned to use. One may wander for miles, try for hours and yet be unable to get within a quarter or half a mile of the sea. The bare smooth mountains and walls oppose one at every turn. Truly, this is a fit place for war, since it gives so little opportunity for the arts of peace.

I had expected Cartagena to prove more conservative in its fishing craft than the ports further south ; but it is not so. No fishing fleet exists, but a few small row-boats hang about the harbour, and hook and drag along the coast outside. In the strait, and where there are most fish, the wind is treacherous, and few can handle a sail there with safety. As one watches the few venturesome craft, taking the strait in the evening light, turning into the dark recesses, overawed by the cliffs which hang like thunderclouds above them, one thrills and fears the boatmen are passing to certain death in the cruel depths of ocean.

Apart from the arsenal, naval docks, and a certain amount of commercial activity, modern Cartagena counts for very little. One should go to see and feel something of the spirit of the old city, and I will confess that alone had interest for me.

Taking a stroll I fell in with Manuela. She told me a plausible story of an actor who owed her money and was sailing for Oran in French Africa. She had come to Cartagena to make a claim through the French Consul, and the ride from Murcia had absorbed all the cash she possessed.

She must stay in Cartagena for a night at least. How could she pay her way ? In her best black, which included a soft silk shawl arranged like a hood over her head and shoulders, Manuela was a combination of mystery and attractiveness, and her attitude towards me was full of confidence. To

my inquiry after the health of Don Anisetto she remarked laconically, " The little rat is just alive." As " La Piña " was a comfortable house, and as Manuela had no scruples, I offered her bed and board whilst she should find it necessary to remain in Cartagena. This she accepted con gusto, but she must return to Murcia on the morrow.

Callous and careful, I allowed nothing to transpire which might cause Manuela to feel I was pleased to have her about me. Detecting my indifference, she assured me of Rosario's unfailing charm and affection, and proposed that I should take her as far as Barcelona, contending she would minister to my wants, make travelling cheaper, and prove the delight of my life. Said she, " Two can live cheaper than one, and live better." It is an old contention, but I had grounds for doubting if it could be true.

I could with gladness take Rosario, but could I leave her ? What did I want of her or she with me ? I went so far as to tell Manuela that if Rosario had friends whom she desired to reach I would pay her travelling expenses. This pleased Manuela mightily, and she proceeded to talk as if we had arranged to return to Murcia on the morrow. But I had no such intention. The train left early, some time before seven ; and I was determined she should not miss it through any neglect of mine.

Mine was a comfortable room ; so was hers ; what need of two " quartos," as we were friends and alone ! Conscious that Don Anisetto was at

least big enough to cause trouble, I kept to my own quarto, and had Manuela up and in the train half an hour before starting-time. To pacify her—I agreed it was possible for me to return to Murcia, for I had to go within a few miles of it to join a train for Elche. I bought her a ticket and provender, and got an unusual amount of affection in return.

The next day I received the following letter; which receives a literal translation :—

"Murcia, 28th March, 1909.

"SIR CARLOS,

"When Doña Manuela returned and told me she had seen you I was rejoiced at the encounter, but I fully expected you to come to me on Sunday. I was overjoyed to know that the door of my house stood open, and that a beautiful repast had been prepared for you, and then I was sad that you did not come. In your absence I must write and present my appeal that you will come to me, that I may talk with you over a subject of interest to us both.

"Understand you, I am, with due appreciation, your friend,

"ROSARIO."

This letter, though fully addressed, had no stamp, but a note that payment was to be made on delivery. It had no postmark, and had evidently been brought by Manuela and left for delivery to me after she had gone.

Doubting the genuineness of this letter, I waited a day or two and then sent a guarded reply, to which came the following :—

" Murcia, 3rd April, 1909.

"APPRECIABLE SIR CARLOS,

" Seeing that I had written you and you had not replied, I was very sad, believing that you had no longer remembered me as I did you. But I see that I was mistaken in the moment that to-day I had the joy to receive your kind letter. Agreeably with what you tell me, I will go to Alicante or Valencia, wheresoever you may await me, but you know my situation, since you were here. I am a woman who wants to be good, and because of being so I find myself thus, for were it not for Doña Manuela and her husband I should have neither lodging nor food, and, thanks to them, I have both.

" To-day I owe them fifty pesetas, and before I leave I desire to pay them, because they are poor ; and I, whilst accepting and thanking you for what you offer me, should be obliged if you would send me the said amount of fifty pesetas, that I may be able to do my duty to this good family who have been so generous towards me.

" I repeat that I should be much obliged to you for it. That is all I can tell you to-day.

" The day I am at your side I will tell you more. I hope you will answer me at once, because my situation is very sad, and you can brighten it.

" Without more to-day, receive you my most sincere affection.

" I am, with all appreciation,

" ROSARIO SANCHEZ."

So convinced was I that these letters were concocted by Don Anisetto and Manuela, and that Rosario was in utter ignorance of them, that I called in an assistant, and much as we debated

the subject, he was inclined to think the letters genuine, and advised me to risk sending fifty pesetas. I did not do so, and the sequel must be told in a later chapter.

In this province unruly children are still told that "Suleyman" is coming, and though he dwells just across the strait the custom dates from the time of the Moors in Spain.

In Andalusia I have heard parents tell their children that the Carthaginians are coming; and, "Oh, go and live with the Moors," is an every-day expression amongst the peasants, when in an angry mood.

All along the south-east coast the cottages and solitary houses have primitive wooden crosses fixed at their gables, a survival of a custom amongst the Moors when the Christians had regained the mastery, and it was politic to hoist a sign of conformity to the faith of Rome.

Cartagena is in some respects the most detached city of Spain, for it is so near to Algiers, Oran, Melilla, Ceuta, and the native ports of Morocco, and so many foreigners are engaged in trade between these places, that the population is much mixed and more of the nature of southern France than Spain. Nearly all the utensils and the trappings of draught animals are Moorish or Eastern in design, and where horses or mules are in pairs a pole projects above their heads and a yoke is let down on the necks, so that they pull from above instead of below.

One Sunday, Cartagena was *en fête* over the Misa de Campaña—the military ceremony at which the young soldiers kiss the sword and flag of Spain. It takes the form of a parade and picturesque disposition of the troops on a wide promenade near the town. A cynic at my side remarked that "Spain had seventy thousand men with the colours on paper—and newspaper at that! There are nearly thirteen thousand officers employed in keeping the game up, the books straight, and their pay sure! Otherwise, why all this flag-flying, bright steel, and blare?" I agree with him. Spain wants a small army to keep the peace at home, and no more. A thousand officers and twenty thousand men could do this work with ease and find ample time for play. Still, I confess that if I had to dwell in Cartagena I should want to be a soldier, so many are the temptations to climb to heights of vantage and growing cheeky yell, "Come and turn me out!"

Getting up for an early morning walk, I usually found the waiter sleeping in the passage or with his chair-bed blocking the main doorway. This was puzzling, for the house was half empty. On putting a question to him he admitted he was "the dog with the open eye," sleeping in the passage to prevent the lodgers from bolting before paying their bills.

Returning by the route I had come I journeyed to within sight of the towers of Murcia, smelt again the strong odours of its violets and orange flowers,

and I have no doubt I thought of Rosario; but I was bent on the sober task of examining some other bits of peopled land, which took me to Molina and Orihuela.

CHAPTER XI

LA BELLA SOMBRA

ORIHUELA, like the vale of Murcia, reveals a wonderful example of intense culture. No particle of earth is left untilled, and every dyke, ditch, and water-hole carries a reed or rush of use in thatching the mean mud huts of the peasants. The climate is so mild that the land is never idle, and the people are everlastingly employed in putting in seed or tending the crops above ground. The holdings are all small—two or three acres—and every one carries a certain amount of flax, which, after being soaked in a water-hole, is retted and sold to the spinners of Elche. As all this region is irrigated, there are banks and ridges unending, and the most permanent are clothed with oranges, date palms, figs, and mulberries, producing a most charming effect. Towards the north are salt marshes and mirage-like lagoons, enclosed by sandspits from the neighbouring sea. Here the scenes are quite Oriental. Grey, sun-parched hills, dry, quaking earth, steel-blue skies, and clumps and belts of towering palms, so numerous as to create forests.

Elche is the most tropical and Eastern in ap-

pearance of all the districts of Spain. In fact, it is hard to realize that it is a part of Europe. One can walk abroad at all hours, and in every direction, and believe oneself to be enjoying some fastness in Asia or North Africa. The little town is grimy, and in every way old ; but the grime is not bad dirt, only dust confined by the belt of palms which stretches out for two or three miles on all sides. This is the only spot in Europe where the date palm is grown for profit. All the palm area is held by peasants, who work from two to three acres of irrigated land, growing artichokes, corn, maize, potatoes, madder, lucerne, and other crops ; and, excepting the date, their chief fruit is the pomegranate, which succeeds well within the shade of the palms. The palms occupy the boundaries and margins of paths only, but rise so high, and are so evenly distributed, as to make an unbroken forest of perpetual shade.

The roadway leading to each house is a rope-walk, as flax yarn-spinning is the chief employment and mainstay of those who farm the land.

Big families are desired and frequently seen, for the more sons and daughters there are, the more cord can be made, and this sells readily on the spot, for the town of Elche lives by making canvas slippers and boots of various kinds, all of which have flax soles. The house paths are true Arcadian ways. The high, sighing branches overhead, with their enormous bunches of golden fruit, the rippling streams of irrigation water which awaken an

almost audible response in every expanding leaf and flower ; the shouts, chants, and sighs of the busy workers—for their tongues are never a moment idle, make a picture rare indeed, and nearer to idyllic happiness than can be described. I hear one truly lovely voice here. It comes not from a cord- but a slipper-maker, who sits in a yard under my window and gives me my fill of perfect soul-music. I feel inclined to interview the man, but think I may disturb and injure him if I dared to tell him what I think of his voice. He sings bits from the best operas, and apart from the voice being well under control, it has a richness and appealing quality which is most rare. This master of song is fat, bullet-headed, round-faced, and about twenty-four. Will any one take him on ?

One feels that great singers should come out of Elche, for the whole community is bent on trying its voice ; and if we liken the towering stems of the palms to the shafts in a great cathedral, it seems natural that those whose lives are cast within this spirit-haunted shade should always be trying to make themselves heard, as they do.

One old cord-spinnner every time he ran towards the wheel to attach the flax end, would look up and in an almost praying voice send a strong, clear appeal among the heads of the high palms, till one could hear his song rising and falling as an echo, floating away among the shadows and the curtain of evening mist which was hanging low.

The flax-spinner travels, in actual walking, from twenty-four to forty miles a day, for his work demands very rapid movement. What is more, a man must hurry if he would earn fifteen pence in a ten to twelve-hour day. Over five hundred men are always making cord among the palms, whilst their wives and daughters sit in the doorways, making up some parts of the slippers. Then there are at least a thousand little boys who have for their task the turning of the huge box wheels, which generate the spinning power. Some boys have two wheels to look after—one at each end of the walk, that the man may work from both ends and waste no time in either direction. This forces the boy to rush from one end of the walk to the other—about fifty yards—with never a moment's rest, except when the man may stop to tie a new coil of flax about his waist. It is most amusing to watch the ingenuity of these boys as they contrive to steal a moment from what comes near to being an "eternal grind." Where two walks are near together the boys pelt each other with clods or bean pods — after eating the beans — and then, spoiling for a fight, they give the wheels an extra sharp turn or two, rush at and stroke each other down, which is their best-known method of doing damage to the person, for they have no idea of using their fists. In all their heat and haste they keep a reserve of calm, for the fathers and big brothers are always shouting "faster," "steady," or "stop," and if the boy is

caught away from his wheel, there is a real and a most unequal Spanish fight.

When there is no chance of getting up a row, the boys shin up the lowest palms and snatch handfuls of the small and husky fruit—for Elche dates are not perfection—and in their haste drop many feet to the ground, and maintain the motion of the wheels by movements and a display of concern at which one is bound to laugh.

This is all very simple, human, and yet most rare—rare in the nature of a sylvan luxury for those of us who have too long been busy and never able to understand to what end we toiled. I had grown to believe that Arcadia must be as far off as Utopia, and that I might never hope to see it for a single hour ; but here in Elche, in the soft air of a spring evening, one has nothing to fear, is content, and feels sure one is near to the source of happiness.

Days went by, and I was charmed to stay. I sat for hours on hours among the palms—in the cool fresh mornings, in the hot noons, through the delicious evening hours, and the pictures, sounds, and inmost feelings were ever a source of blessing to me, and so I am glad to write that Elche is a restful and a generous spot, where man, by direct hand labour, and free from all the grime and noise of sickening whirring machinery and city misery, is doing enough to sustain himself, living rapidly enough, and thinking well enough ; and I come to discern and believe that the simple and quiet

occupations of unambitious men are the only ones by which we may be soothed and satisfied.

All Elche bespeaks age. Its city fathers issue "Edictos," "Manifestaciones," "Pronunciemientos," and "Decretos"; then it has its "Repartado de Aguas," a body of peasant farmers and market-gardeners who meet in the porch of the town hall, and, without ceremony, settle on the spot who shall and who shall not have water for his crops.

At Elche I lived by the market, so near that women took possession of the bit of pavement in front of my door, and piled huge baskets and nets of oranges and onions till I could get no way without working my passage.

As a travel note, I say that one is never more sure of clean and generous quarters than in a market square. The people who keep such houses must be of the large-hearted and accommodating type, or they would fail utterly. What is more, market houses do a roaring trade, and there is a wealth of rough comfort and a degree of security in them which one may not hope to obtain in any other house on the same terms. Then market houses are almost certain to be "respectable," yet full of the most typical and interesting class of local countryman. So, as a poor traveller, go to market houses. More often than not the host is so busy as to be brusque or unconcerned, but when once quarters are obtained, one may share all the benefits of the house and have plenty. Here

in Elche the market was on the sunniest and most picturesque of sites; the fondista's face was always shining, her eyes and hair were so dark and glistening that I have no doubt I struck the right shop. The food was not of the best; but it was clean and abundant, and as I could draw wine as I would, I did not go short. I paid three pesetas, or about two shillings, a day for bed and board, and there was no sign of an "extra."

Elche holds all the material for a novel; for it is full of charm and human types.

From the tower of Santa Maria, one looks over a square mile or so of mouse-grey sandstone habitations. All the roofs are flat, the windows are few and very small, and the majority so shaped or guarded that it would be impossible to hope for such success as came to Lochinvar. But there is ample room for love and hate there, and the daily round of common tasks would well bear telling. Looking out from the church tower, and imagining the field for a work of fiction, a funeral came into view, with a pure white coffin, or rather a coffin covered with white damask cloth with much gold-gilt ornament, streamers and large bows of white silk and a white plush pansy, fully ten inches across, placed at its head. A bleached palm branch was tied to one side of the coffin, and the initials of the deceased were tacked at the head. Sixteen priests chanted a brief service at the church door, and about three hundred men and

boys followed in a rambling train—the actual mourners somewhere near the last. It was a boy of fifteen who had died. The father was a small shopkeeper; but he did not appear to carry his business instincts into the church, the priests were quite numerous enough to do that for him.

After such a peaceful time it was only natural that I should set out from Elche with a boisterous and most humorous drunkard. Drinking and brawling is so rare in Spain that one almost welcomes the acquaintance of a man in liquor, since it shows another phase of its infinitely varied people. The strong point of this drunkard was his affection; he insisted on bestowing it and himself on me.

I "stood" him a seat in the tartana I hired to take me to the station. In return for this he must needs kiss me; evidently he had made a gluttonous meal of cod-fish, saffron, and raw onions! He had a goatskin bag of wine, and though we were not supposed to touch the mouthpiece on drinking, the liquor reeked of onion and the more subtle odours of its owner. The low-roofed third-class carriage was already crowded; but we were bundled in and literally dumped on the floor, where we sat, the drunkard with most of his weight on me, his arms round my waist, his stubbly cheek pressed against mine. The heat was tropical; most of the passengers were women nursing market-baskets, and as they regarded me as the more drunken of the two, they would not hear

of my standing up, so I sat and rolled about and fought for breath, and submitted to having wine poured into my mouth, over my face, and every part of me, till I was drenched and disgusting to myself and to every one about me except my affectionate friend, who, I will admit, paid me more compliments and promised me more protection than all the rest of humanity put together. I wanted to see and say what the land is like between Elche and Alicante ; but, in plain English, I don't know anything about it. I made it my business so to prime my friend from his own wine-skin, and my white spirit flask, as to have him incapable of pursuing me beyond the train. " Mixed drinks" did their work. When last I saw him he was in a noisy sleep on the floor of the railway carriage.

CHAPTER XII

A FUNERAL AND SOME VITAL CONCERNS

MAY we be led to understand and, as far as possible, enter into the lives of others!

One evening I took a walk, bent on no more than refreshment, and perchance the sight of some old ruin, or an extra fine view of the Bay of Alicante. I sighted a large cross on a high fluted column, and guessed it to be the local Calvario, for many Spanish cities have their cross-crowned Calvary Hill.

In pursuing the winding road up the sandstone slope, I came to the cemetery, and as the gate was open, and I had not been inside a Spanish burying-ground for many years, I turned into this one. I do not like cemeteries, though one of my favourite haunts is an old churchyard. Any one with a turn for quietness will understand and appreciate the difference. But of all European resting-places, these of Spain strike one as the most repellent.

According to the size and importance of the community, the forms of interment vary from two to six or seven. Thus in villages are large pits, each receiving many bodies, whilst a few families may have their members buried separately, or in

household vaults. These are ranged like bakers' ovens, round deep walls of brick or stone, usually so flimsy and so frequently disturbed as to present a perpetual scene of ruin, and the sights and odours are always repulsive.

In more important burial-places, there are underground vaults, with enclosed spaces above forming little porches, chapels, or greenhouses full of flowers and symbolical climbing plants. In the dry chambers are photos or paintings of the deceased, wreaths, testimonials, letters of condolence, violet and purple banners and bows, charms, figures of saints and virgins, jars, urns, rosaries, palm branches, and other symbols of holy faith and human affection.

More important tombs are surmounted by massive piles of stone; and many by chapels of considerable size. But with few exceptions the construction is bad; and the best of materials soon slip out of form in this intensely dry and devastating climate, so that the general effect is one of ruin; and one bites one's lips at discerning the futility of building to defy the ravages of time.

I went through section after section; for if the Spaniards are in life equal and familiar, it is noticeable that in death they like to assert their social distinction. At last on the highest ground, and under a high wall, I took a commanding view of half the old city, much of the bay, the distant and low island of Tobago, a magnificent range of bare

and purple mountains, and the churlish strip of lowland bordering the leaden sea. Here I stood to gaze and ruminate, and then to ask why I had of all places chosen such a grim spot on which to end the day ?

Graves by the score were lying open ; and I was actually standing on a huge mound of sandy earth which had been raised by the sinking of a new pit, intended for those whose relations are too poor to provide coffins or separate interment. From appearances about six bodies were already laid side by side, and not more than a foot of soil covered them. Fully twenty more would occupy the same level ; then a new layer, and still others, to within three feet of the surface. The single graves were never more than four feet in depth. They were not of coffin form, but long and irregular holes. This apparently bad workmanship is excusable, for the soil is loose and entirely dry, so that it runs on being touched ; and as this had been disturbed over and over again, and coffin-wood showed all through it, it was impossible to sink shapely graves.

Three or four quiet, elderly men were still at work. One had for his task the collecting and carrying to a heap of the heaviest wood and bones thrown out. Near this charnel-heap were several new coffins which had held bodies, but all were partly broken, or the cloth and gilding was torn and disfigured. I asked no questions, and did not go within a few yards of this heap, and so was

unable to learn the reason of their lying above ground, and in such a conspicuous position.

I went back to the mound, and as I stood there looking first into the pit, and then upon the commanding surface of the world, a small crowd of men, and two or three women and children, turned a corner of the wall, and I saw a coffin borne towards me. It was on the shoulders of four men.

There was neither priest, sexton, undertaker nor official of any kind. When they came to the pit before me, the coffin was put down and the men said as one, " I suppose it's here ? " Then one of the grave-diggers called, and wished to know why a body was brought so late in the evening. There was a discussion ; and one of the single graves was chosen close under the wall. At the same time a young man lifted the coffin lid, for it was merely laid on, and I saw a well-grown man of about thirty.

He was in a black suit with neat white linen, and looked no paler or more deathly than most of those who stood round. The little crowd showed not the slightest fear of death, and their talk was quite lively. When the lid was put down, a man pulled off the bit of yellow braid which ran down the centre and across the shoulders of the coffin. Three or four of the children grabbed for this, and he divided it amongst them. Then, with his knife, he lifted off three tin-gilt letters from the coffin head, and gave them to the children. Later the coffin lid was lifted again, and a man took a pair

of scissors from his pocket and cut the trouser fronts from the ankles to above the knees. Then he cut the sides of the waistcoat and the coat sleeves. At first I thought the body was to be buried nude, but the lid was put down and padlocked, and from the remarks of those around, I learned that the slashing of the clothes was to prevent their being stolen from the corpse. The coffin was now placed directly in the shallow grave, and we all took a handful of earth and performed the last rites in silence. Two men then fell to filling the hole—for it was no grave—and the others lighted cigarettes, smoked, and looked on.

One wretched creature of about twenty-two, and very poorly clad, had a weird twist in his face and walk, and tried now and then to cry. He would lean against the wall, draw up his features and one leg, and wriggle as if under some paroxysm of nervous pain. Then he would straighten his face with his hands, and stand up with some show of courage, looking very intently at the work of the grave-fillers. This poor fellow was evidently a relation of the dead man, and he was most truly to be pitied. He revealed a singular incapacity to get rid of his grief. His actions seemed scarcely human, and yet as the central figure he was the most human of all. I wanted to offer him a cigarette, but as the others did not, I concluded he was to suffer alone.

One by one we went off, each saying as he went "Felicidad," and God knows that I wondered

where it was to come from or to be found! The Cross of Calvary towered above me; and the night was coming on as I went down through an almost pestilential part of the cemetery to the main gate, where two fat and coarse priests and the gate-keeper were making merry over their talk. I had tears on my cheeks and a heavy pain at my heart, and their gluttonous faces maddened me. I could have kicked them out, and kicked them far, and made them familiar with mental and physical pain, of which the brutes could know neither. I wanted to persuade myself that there is a God in heaven, and that he has priests on earth with a care for the souls of—and, aye—even for the dead bodies of men. But I was proud in that hour, and conscious that the world's pain and ills, its sin and selfishness, will never be ended; and it seems vain to hope that in this part of the earth we shall ever come to possess men, who, if they cannot keep us to decent living, will at least see that in the name of Christ and His charity, we are given decent burial.

Alicante is a clean, well-built, semi-French town; and its general appearance, sand colour shot with pinkish tiles and pepper-sprinkled roofs. But for a horribly smelly harbour it would be a pleasant place of resort, for it has an almost limitless extent of strand, and fish most varied and repulsive, so that anglers of all ages are continually interested.

My diary records some "neutral" days here.

I do not complain. An old castle with a long story towers high above the town, and one evening I climbed to it and looked out on Alicante. It seemed to me as a broad yellow shed, from which the noise of the workers arose as so much knocking and calling. They were struggling down there and could not get out! How sobering it is to sit above the crowd now and then!

Although I often think and write to the contrary, I begin to know Spain too well. It never for one instant loses its glamour; but many good things have become commonplace, to the extent that I cannot pursue them. Henceforth life must consist in an intelligent employment of my time. Apart from what necessity imposes, I have no desire to work. Work is the world's mania, and I would be sane, aloof, and at rest.

As a city, Alicante lives entirely by the exportation of wine which is grown far inland. Ten or twelve large steamers come and go every day; all their burden is wine and more wine. Most of the juice goes to France for blending purposes, but considerable quantities are taken to South America and other early Spanish possessions.

The fishing fleet here is large, but the boats, with rare exceptions, and their crews are devoid of interest and very dirty.

As a province, Alicante is frightfully poor—mountainous, waterless, and composed of such materials as furnish the meanest supplies of soil. Dug-out dwellings are discoverable in all directions,

and there are evidences of occupation over great periods of time. The dug-out dwellings of Spain would, if well illustrated and described, form an interesting chapter.

About fifty miles from Alicante the nature of the rocks changes, rich soils form, and sufficient spring and rain-water appears to make splendid rivers. It is from these that the most extensive area of rich land in Spain—the vega of Valencia—is made. The vega extends nearly to Jativa, a small and extremely picturesque town about thirty miles from the coast. Jativa is famous as the birthplace of Pope Calixtus the Third, the grandfather of Lucrezia Borgia.

In Alicante I had replied to Rosario's second letter; and whilst hereabouts I received in reply :—

"Murcia, 11th April, 1909.

"Querido Don Carlos,

"I was uneasy because I had no letter from you, and to-day receive your favour of the 9th.

"I am obliged for your good intentions towards me, and see your chivalry and good-heartedness, regretting in my soul not to be able to become your travelling companion, owing to the reasons that you explain to me.

"I know nobody at Valencia now. If owing to your good feelings, and the offer you made me here, you will send me for the railway ticket, or, for a good souvenir of you as long as I live; if for the former I will go to Valencia, and if for the latter I will pay therewith for my necessities. You are quite at liberty to act with me as your heart

dictates to you. You have offered and I accept. You understand that in writing you thus I do not wish to exploit you. If, as you indicate in your letters, it is true that you like [love] me [the terms are synonymous in Spain], this is the moment in which to prove it to me, for you know my sad position, which if it is not more gay is because I do not want to be bad.

" By registered letter I ask you to send me what you like, and tell me what use I am to make of the money, whether for the ticket or to look after myself. I like you, not for the money, but because I have seen you are a most worthy person, for if I ask you for something it is not to exploit you, for if I had had money I would have gone to you at Alicante, and if to-day I had some in lieu of this letter I would go, but she who, such as I, has not money enough for bread, has less for travelling. Now you will act according to your feelings and the degree of affection you possess for me. I beg you not to leave me unheeded, and to reply at once. Since it is not possible to go and be with you always, at least I hope you will help me with something for which I shall never forget you, and if you send me the wherewithal to leave I will do so at once.

" Without more for you to-day—conserve your health well and receive the affection of her who loves you. ROSARIO SANCHEZ."

The answer to this letter amounted to an offer to send fifty pesetas to Murcia, if proof were forthcoming that the money would be received by Rosario, unknown to Manuela and Don Anisetto.

Sign and gesture are so much a part of the language of Spain that a stranger is often detected before he opens his mouth.

Much as the British dislike bodily movement and mannerism, they cannot know, and at the same time object to, the ordinary hand, face, and shoulder play of the Spaniards. Here are the most common signs and gestures—some of which may be noted as equally French and Italian.

Rubbing the thumb on the forefinger—as if sprinkling salt—means robbery, jobbery, or something to do with money.

The forefinger placed beside or curled over the nose means, "Mum's the word," "I warn you"; or it may be meant to hide the truth or subtle point of the thing said. This is a southern and rather vulgar habit.

The forefinger wagged in front of the face means a decided No.

All the fingers and thumb pinched up and jerked towards the mouth or throat means an invitation to dine, or that food is abundant or good, or would be welcome, or that one should hurry and eat more. It is a sign of want, a boast of plenty and of hospitality, and always reveals more of human character than any words.

The hand wide open, and the little finger and thumb wide apart, bears a rough resemblance to the cantara—drinking-pitcher. Held in this manner and tipped towards the mouth the hand suggests a drink, or that plenty of wine is about. When this sign is made, one eye is closed and the face distorted exactly as one would on taking a drink without putting the lips to the mouthpiece

of the pitcher. This face play is often exceedingly clever and as genuinely amusing. What is more, it is never vulgar.

The wide-open and trembling hand, held transversely to the body, means disgust, indignation, or a plea for fairness.

The sudden clapping of the hands against the hips means "I give it up," "Enough," "It is fate," "It is the way," "I drink your health in vinegar."

Pressing down a little finger with the thumb of the other hand is equal to, "Here you have the truth in its essence"—or, "Accept it from me."

The arms curved over the head, and the fingers snapped, is an unmistakable sign of joy or happiness, as at sudden good news or at a feast or merry-making.

Stiffening the arm and jerking a thumb towards a shoulder implies strength for any task or scheme. This is vulgar.

Holding the open hand before the face and then letting the fingers drop forward means—"Stop, I know," or, "Our difference is complete."

Straightening up the body and moving the head on the shoulders till one is reminded of the letter S, and at the same time lifting the eyelids and revealing a most intimate look, means—"This is all," "This is my lot," "God help us," "Fate," and similar thoughts and feelings. I have seen this gesture a thousand times, and never without being surprised at the extraordinary expressive-

ness. One knows exactly what is meant, and is in some inscrutable way satisfied. This is the most fatalistic and unanswerable gesture in Europe.

In offering anything, such as a cigar, flower, food, or wine, the hand is always jerked up suddenly, and the gift presented with an intimate nod and a stiff back.

The eye is used with extraordinary effect and performs miracles of deception.

A single hand-clap calls a waiter or cabman or street hawker.

Ducking the fingers and arm outwards to form a swan head and neck, means "Stop," or "Come here"; whilst the open hand pushed outwards, equals "Be off!" or "Go away."

Clapping the thigh is equal to an encore or applause.

Clinching the hand over the face or breast—a feminine action—indicates shyness, caution, modesty, reserve, or fear. It has grown out of the Oriental habit of veiling the face and breast—the most sacred part—and imitates the drawing in of the hood, veil, or neck covering. This gesture is most graceful, effective, and capable of revealing the finest shades of feminine emotion.

Beyond all these signs and movements there is la lingua de amor y abanica—the language of love and the fan, as well as the evolutions of the masculine lover; but as I have never "plucked the turkey," I can say nothing definite on this subject.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HOME OF ROMANCE

VALENCIA DEL CID rises a summer picture of white and warm blue, set in an almost boundless frame of restful green. One thinks of Venice, though the two are little alike. The early settlement rose out of a swamp intersected by numerous rivers, and bounded by a languid green sea. This swamp, when drained and turned to use, formed the basis of a kingdom, and to-day Valencia affords one of the world's most striking examples of what humanity may accomplish when in permanent possession of a few square miles of deep and well-watered soil. The more classic city of Saguntum towers within sight of Valencia—a glorious ruin—but still good evidence that the second Punic War was not so much over the ownership of a pile of rock forming a warrior stronghold, but rather as to who should possess this good strip of land. Saguntum was known as the key to Eastern Spain, and it was, in so far as it opened the door of the great granary of the plain of Valencia. Those old-time fighting men could win battles and maintain their positions only where there was a chance to dig a hasty meal from a

fertile soil. Coming to this spot in the spring of the year, one almost droops under the weight of actual story and rich natural scents which fill the air. The streets of the city are perfectly flat, but the old houses rise into mountains of wonder, and one bows in reverence, even where one does not understand.

Though born and buried in Burgos, this is the actual home of El Cid Campeador—"lord of the tented field," as the Moors called him—father of the swashbucklers and king of all national heroes. The city has been rebuilt many times since his day, and it is uncertain that he ever walked a foot of the existing streets; yet we feel his presence, for this is his city, these his rivers and fields, this his sea, and it was under this blue sky that he lived to make stirring history and to lay the foundations of romance, which has outlived a thousand years.

In the Calle Cabelleros — "street for gentlemen!"—the houses are still veritable strongholds. Immense iron-bound doors give way to a low, covered court, large enough to hold five hundred blustering, armour-clanking fighting men. A marble stairway springs out of a mass of carved stone, and is so wide that men might ascend ten or twelve abreast, and have room for their bloody work. The light is feeble—a mere beam —sent down the chimney-like shaft in the centre of the building. Steeds snort and sneeze in dark recesses to right and left, and though they

are the gentlest of African barbs, and their only burden my lady's carriage, their echoes turn the old house into a place of present danger, and when the fear passes we expect to see some terrible dwarf or goblin hop down the great stairs. It is something to be able to realise our dreams—love and fear—and actually look upon the enchanted world of childhood. The city is still in its youth, or is the home of youth. No one here can be altogether serious and have done with play. The ghosts are not laid, but somehow we are not afraid of them—they are all such audacious and merry rascals. In winter they might scare a little, but in these bright spring days the Valencian blood warms and lives on the sunshine and the orange odours and the flowers.

Strange indeed it looks for Spain to put off her Moorish cloak and veil and join hands in public play, yet that is what these Valencians do. It is Eastertide, when tens of thousands of flower-decked, hand-linked, romping bands of maids and men go forth to the "campo"—the cultivated plain around the town—there to sing, play games and make merry, exactly as the chroniclers assure us they did full five hundred years ago. One of Spain's earliest singers wrote here :

> Come forth, come forth, ye maidens,
> The woodlands all are green—

and though the "woodlands" are but low forests of pale mulberry and soft almond and deep orange-

green they are centuries on centuries old, shaggy and storied, shady and inviting. The round robin is formed within the shade, and that wonderful soul music of the primitive Spaniard escapes the guitar till of a sudden a trembling voice is raised—a faithful imitation of the languorous complaining of the strings, and then the tale of the heart is told—never in true rhyming metre—hope and a regret in two uneven lines. The rice-fields are little mirror-like squares, for they are at all times flooded, and the foot-wide margins are unequal to the needs of two palpitating lovers ; hence the air is full of laughter and reproach, so numerous are the slips and splashings into the shallow waters.

A visitor remarks that Valencia lacks colour. He seems unable to detect the splendid colour of its life. The streets are always crowded, and the crowd is clean and very handsome. There are no beggars, and little visible and objectionable dirt. In some respects it is a woman's town, for it has splendid shops, and makes lovely silks and laces, rare fans, fine leather goods and jewellery and furbelows to no end ; but it has many more enduring attractions, and its official class and their employments are as quaint and fascinating as are to be found anywhere.

A kind of police—there are about half a dozen kinds in all—wear red coats, and by way of complete contrast the postmen are in blue. The city guards look like comic-opera soldiers, for they are all slashed and splashed with red and black and

gold, and wear hats something between an ill-used helmet and a battered pudding-mould. They carry sharp swords, wear a sleepy expression, and some of them have that classic attribute, a "fair round belly" of white doeskin, so that one feels much tempted to play the wag, slap the body of the law smartly and bolt, exclaiming, "What ho, there! How goes the watch to-night?" Lying in one's bed the voice of the city makes itself heard, for all the night long the "Sereno" calls the hours. He is a most useful person, but when not wanted one feels for him as did Calverley towards his neighbour's dog—"loves him, but he will not die." El Sereno has a horse-pistol, or at least a Colt revolver, hanging to one of his shanks, and on the other a huge ring and bunch of keys heavy enough to sink Horatius. But, aided by a bright steel pike, he bears up against his load, and tramps his particular length of street, at intervals calling the hour, and "It's fine," "It's cloudy," "It's raining," "It's blowing strong," "There's a fire, but keep cool"; "Get up, those wanting to catch the early train." So he goes on, according to his strength and the number of enemies he imagines are within hearing. But when you are out late, El Sereno's virtues are undeniable. At a hand-clap he appears, finds the keyhole and the right key; looks you up and down to see how you are, and how long it is likely to take you to mount the stairs, and then, calculating to a nicety, he gives you a taper—a glorified kind of match, which at first sight you

feel you must keep as a souvenir till you realise that after all it is but a young candle ; so after you have given El Sereno a penny and assured him you are not so and so—for if you are masculine and a foreigner he takes it for granted you are—he puts you on the first step of the stairs, and makes a rather rude remark to the effect that you must keep going. Once I heard him quote a proverb in an aside, which had for its moral point the advantages of leading a clean and sober life. Valencia del Cid is an old-fashioned place truly, yet it has life enough and an air about it which savours of eternal spring.

The Valencians are the most mirthful and genuinely light-hearted of Spaniards. At Eastertide they reveal themselves in their true character, and one is charmed to rejoice with them, so sweet and invigorating is their display and happiness. This is the ninth consecutive day of feasting and diversion ; and still no sign of boredom or fatigue.

They play many of our holiday and festival games—all I can recall except kiss-in-the-ring—and have a number of open-air games which demand forfeits and so make young men look ridiculous and taunting maidens happy.

A most amusing game is called " Madre y nîno " —mother and child,—or beating the baby. It is played by children. A mother and baby are elected, and a long rope is tied, one end round the waist or under the arms of each. Then the baby

sits down and the mother walks out to the full length of the string. The other children then have to rush in and beat the baby without being caught. In her mad rush the mother frequently overruns the range of the rope, and in so doing drags the poor baby along and inflicts far more punishment than the mock villains. Whoever is caught takes the baby's place and escapes by next assuming the rôle of mother. This game is quite delightful—excepting for the baby.

The Spanish newspapers nearly always have a column headed "The Religious Life," and devote a great deal of space to the functions and services of each day. Priests also come in for a good deal of notice in the doings, happenings and preferments of public men. A newspaper "contents" sheet in Valencia on Good Friday was filled with these words :

DEATH
OF
JESUS CHRIST
PONTIUS PILATE WASHED
A FIVE HOURS' OPERATION

This had reference to an old and surviving custom, whereby Pontius, in the form of an effigy, is hustled and maltreated by the mob, and then washed and sweetened in readiness for this world or the next—I don't know which, for some told me he survived the five hours' washing and went about his business, others that he went below, and others

again said he was bastante limpia—or clean enough for el cielo—heaven.

Holy Week in Valencia is nothing more serious than a sober holiday. True, the people are very quiet till the resurrection is announced ; then they break forth in real earnest, and the oddest features of all are the little processions, made up of children or adults of the various barrios—or districts—of their local church, and a few more or less mysterious martyrs and heroes. There are also babies in cradles and in mangers, and a multitude of wax figures and fancy candles ; for though it is the season of Christ the man, Christ the babe and the Virgin at Bethlehem are not forgotten.

In the Cathedral I saw the rending of the veil, and confess to being surprised at its ineffectiveness. During a long service, when the point is reached at which Christ is declared to have risen, an immense curtain, arranged over the entire front of the transcoro or choir screen and support of the high altar, is supposed to be miraculously rent in twain, and Christ revealed to the expectant congregation. Time was when the curtain was rent as if by magic, and heavenly music burst from a celestial choir ; but the Church is in all ways enfeebled, and spends less and less on unprofitable shows. The "veil" now consists of a double curtain on rollers, and at a signal each half is drawn aside with a huggle-guggle sound, like that of stiff wooden cog-wheels, and that is the only noise. No music. No figure

of Christ. No choir of angels. Nothing for the eye, the ear, or the heart to rejoice over.

In Seville they make much of the "Rending of the Veil," as they do of all their shows. I have not seen it in Seville, but as it is carried out in Valencia it is so poor that if one were not expectant this incident of the Good Friday festival would never be noticed.

The Valencian fishing-craft are quite large, for the local waters are often turbulent and the fishing-grounds far from shore. The boats are extremely wide, almost round, have full, much-ridged decks, and a low bulwark, signs that they are made for rough seas and to shed water quickly. They are nearly all painted white, and the bow-piece, projecting three or four feet, is surmounted by a thick hoop of wood, rope, or piece of a fleece, so that it looks like a turban.

These boats are practically unsinkable. They are manned by six to ten men, and carry two or three large pieces of white canvas.

At Valencia one sees oranges in quantity for the first time—scores of square miles of trees, scores of miles of river, road, and railway, and scores of thousands of men, all scented, coloured, burdened with oranges. The orange crop of Valencia has a value of about one and three-quarter million sterling; reduce this to farthings and you get somewhere near the number of oranges exported each year.

As the King was expected, I was regarded as a

possible regicide, and shadowed by the country police for several days. But the Guardia Civiles have my complete respect. I know no similar body so uniformly alert, courteous, and well-informed of their duties. I have met these men in all sorts of places, and never had cause to do less than admire them. The only thing one might possibly object to is the cut of their trousers; these are poems in wrinkles and crinkles, like concertina bellows, and every cut is so much at random that they fit nowhere, except where they are strapped in at the waist. The Guardia Civiles are said to be splendid marksmen, but they sometimes miss the floor and spit on one's boots.

To the south of Valencia the hill country is very poor, and the long, narrow vales composed of dry, stony, shallow soil. In the absence of tunnels the trains are composed of two-deckers, and from the tops of these airy carriages one gets plenty of pure air and full round pictures at every turn of the way. But all this region lacks finish. Pictures are common enough, but the materials composing them alarm or displease. A village may show a score of washerwomen laving garments in a turgid and stagnant pool. This water may be used daily for a year and subjected to no cleansing save by the influence of the sun. Then the rubbish-pits, pig-wallows, and drains are in false positions, and there is no trimness or order in the domestic plan. Where the land is poor all intelligence and industry is used up in plotting for

daily bread; none are working to beautify a single yard of their possessions, and every ruin is half an eyesore. In cool and moist regions time mellows and glorifies the builder's work; but here the weak materials, unsupported by any generous or inviting landscape, look miserable in their decay, and proclaim the folly or hopelessness of human effort. In a country like England we may preserve the aims and achievements of a thousand years and see the land grow more beautiful and strong. Not so in Spain; here time mutilates and disfigures, so that every human effort becomes purposeless and almost unreasonable. Nothing lasts, nothing is within bounds, nothing remains private or hallowed. The very wind at all seasons howls as much as to say, "I will have change." Fence or wall confine for no more than a moment, and then break, not into beautiful ruin, but into pictures of futile labour and hopeless loss. And when we come to the life of the peasant we find him wanting in what man ever desires, a strong hold upon life. For if the eyes of youth are bright, the shoulders of age are always swathed in rags; and if it can be said it is a blessed climate where the feet can go unshod, it is chilling to see them dirty and misshapen. The independent traveller rejoices in the gaiety and glory of the southern poppy-field; but to those who struggle and spend themselves to win a little golden grain, the warmth and colour and brightness of the crimson weed avail nothing. More often the pretty fields are

the poor ones, they are the playgrounds of the weeds ; and one writes this because so many who travel in Spain cannot understand why a land can appear so beautiful and prove so poor.

Towards Denia are wide marshes and meres, areas reclaimed from the sea and where rice is grown in great quantities. The rice cultivators wear a short white kilt, or petticoat, known as a camiset. Rice land soon becomes polluted and causes fevers, and there is a law in Spain forbidding the planting of rice until the land and water has been approved by a medical officer.

The Denians are a fine type of people showing much intelligence and great industry. Their little town is beautifully clean and without any sign of a shop, or fonda, or anything to indicate they are in trade. Whether they are too proud or economical to hang out a sign or put up a shop-front is not ascertainable. Their explanation is, " We are here and known, and what is wanted will be asked of us." Denia is a very companionable place, quiet and almost Arcadian in its appearance and employments ; neither poverty nor riches seem to disturb its folk. A splendid old castle covers the crown of a conical hill, and the town clings round the slopes. The fisher-folk are an interesting group, and use a boat similar to the Valencians, but much smaller. The catch is taken during daylight ; and just before sundown and supper-time, when the clear evening light makes a truly sublime picture of land and sea, the boats return to

port, the fish is taken ashore, and a hasty auction is made, the hawkers competing for the first lots that they may be off to supply the housewives who are awaiting them with their deep basin-pans of boiling oil. On the beach, and up little white walled streets, boat keels of carob wood are laid, and many a boat has for its first freight a sleeping babe or a full cargo of playful children, who, as the craft nears completion, employ their brains in defining its sex and wooing the builder that it may be named Bonita Juana (pretty Jane) or Joven Pepê (young Joseph). There is ever an air of secrecy and suspicion about the smallest group of fisher-folk, for any boat is big enough to do a bit of gun-running between Spain and the Moorish coast; there is the possibility of smuggling at all seasons, and coastguardsmen, carabineros and others in uniform, look on at each boat in the making, for its sides may be double, or treble, or, as a town official said, "The deep sea may call for a deep (and hollow) keel."

So with all the quiet of Denia and the peace that broods over its wide bay, every boat is watched, for as the fisher-folk say, "It's no good owning a boat that won't carry any sort of cargo."

Denia is the centre of the raisin industry. Over twenty-five thousand tons of fruit leave the port every autumn; and though several other countries have entered the field, the pudding raisin of Denia remains the best in the world.

About twenty miles inland a beautiful hollow,

amid the hills, is known as Dignified Valley, or Valdigna. Here is an exceedingly pretty town which lives by exporting what it claims to be the finest oranges on the London market. It is also famous for its Alpine strawberries, often over an inch in diameter. They have a delicious flavour.

CHAPTER XIV

VAGABOND DISCOVERIES AND REFLECTIONS

SAGUNTUM thrills and charms. It occupies a glorious position, commanding wonderful views of sea and land, and preserves the story of over three thousand two hundred years. "How full, how brimful!" one exclaims on wandering here, for though dead so long, it stimulates and provokes the enthusiasm of youth. History and romance make all the world, and we should care little for our own achievements if we felt they went unnoticed and unrecorded. Saguntum lies about three miles from the sea on a mile-long ridge commanding the great plain of Valencia. Its castle remains one of the largest ruins in the Peninsula, virtually a city on the crown of the ridge. No wonder there was a row about the ownership of Saguntum!

Granada is in some ways more splendid, for it commands the eternal snows, rivers, many more trees, a cooler air, softer light, and its nearness in point of historic time enables one to see, feel, and imagine more about it; but, taking Saguntum and the surrounding land and storied sea, it is a rare place; this part of Europe can show none

more impressive. The Roman theatre remains a substantial ruin on the side of the hill, and has its seats cut out of the solid rock. There is a very old church at Saguntum, but it has been entirely rebuilt, part of a doorway alone remaining. This is still a show place, and a man vowed to me that the church dates from " a long time before Christ."

There are several exceedingly interesting features in the domestic arrangements of Saguntum. The scarf-like towel, but without the water, hangs from the walls as in Murcia. Large blinds, with monograms a foot or more in depth, in bright coloured wool-work, serve as door-plates and shop-keepers' signs. Most of the shop goods are kept in immense jars and in deep recesses in the walls. The water-vessels are little barrels of cork, gaily ornamented with brass bands and a mouthpiece of the same metal.

An ermita occupies a part of the hill and is approached by a pure white road, for all the rocks are kept immaculately clean by frequent white-washings. Sixteen little stations or praying-places are encountered on the way. When one at last gains the ermita, a rare picture, helped out by the fortified heights, the antiquated town, the life and concern of the rich vega, the distant sea, and last of all, the white road which leadeth unto rest, is obtained. This visit was made on a bright sunshiny day, but later I came again, when there was driving rain. The wetting of everything added enormously to the impressive character of the hills

and forts, the old towers, and the old town. The moisture brought out the odours of the earth and their burden of trees, for there were miles and miles of oranges in full bloom, and the air was faint to sickening point. Why, I do not attempt to explain; but I was compelled to think of Saguntum as the Bride of Fate.

As one travels northward, mountains of hard grey stone rise to reveal many splendid scenes. At one part of the road a series of shaggy grey cones are poised like grim giants frowning under their beards of wind-blown mist. Lower down these giants have deposited areas of rich and wonderfully well-tilled land; but even the poorest parts have the utmost done to them in the way of cultivation. The peasantry of Castellon are very distinct from those of the surrounding provinces, having quite negro features, and their implements and field customs are strongly reminiscent of Africa.

One may take the northern road for a couple of hundred miles and remain in sight of the sea, but there is not much to be seen in the way of interesting garb or fishing-craft. As one nears Barcelona the fishing-boats suddenly become smaller, like those of the far south. Sitges is the prettiest little town on this coast. Seen at a distance it is a perfect picture, and will bear close inspection. Its women are reputed to be the prettiest in Catalunia. But I was much more concerned with what it holds in the way of employment and human

comfort. It has a tiny bay and quay, a little fleet and its folk ; there are vineyards, and olive, fig, and almond plantations all around ; occasional palms and innumerable pomegranates ; clambering bougainvillea roses and wistaria ; it has crowded little streets with pure white walls, dovecot-like windows, and red and white and yellow carnations growing bravely in almost every one of them. Then there are many detached houses with gardens and lumbering water-wheels, and a new world bowing and shaking hands with it, for Sitges is but an hour's run from the great city of Barcelona, and thereby gains in quietness and quaintness by contrast through its nearness to the modern world. To me it seemed to hold all those luxuries which are comforts, and none which are a fatigue and a nuisance.

Half the journey from Sitges to Barcelona lies through tunnels on the steep cliffs by the sea. Windows are cut in the rock to let in the light ; one gets the most fascinating pictures through them, especially in the evenings when small companies of folk are gathering round the smacks on the shore. The other half of the journey lies over the richest of plain land devoted to market-gardens, small farms and nurseries. Parts of the country yield meres and lines of tall white poplars, providing scenes such as French artists love to seize and paint.

Barcelona breaks on the view as a great manufacturing, chimneyed, and groaning city, lacking

only one thing distinctly English—much smoke. Here life is varied and distinct from all other to be seen in Spain ; and it is hard to imagine wider contrasts in any land than exist between Barcelona and some of the communities of its province.

Mine host of Barcelona works about ten hours a day ; and, although he knows I am aware of it, he boasts without turning a hair that he works but a short six ! Give an Englishman six hours' work and he will make it sixteen, so pronounced is his desire to be thought a hard-working man. Here is all the difference. The Spaniard always underrates his actual job, and deplores something or other that is wrong with the country. The Englishman exaggerates the weight and importance of his work, and doesn't care a colloquial cuss about his country. This host of mine could be very amusing ; but he was so opposite to my way of thinking that I generally laughed when he felt I should applaud. Only on one point did I most cordially agree with him ; he is a Catalan of the most intense type, and deplores the vandalism which is destroying the older parts of Barcelona. They are knocking down scores of acres of lovely old houses, destroying for ever the quaintest of historic high- and by-ways ; and all for the sake of " progress." Oh, progress ! What crimes are every day committed in thy name !

I have been studying Catalan, and am now prepared to say that any one who can run off " zig-zag gig-wig hic-cup " two or three times and

not bungle the sentence will soon be at home with the Catalans. Fun apart, it is a queer sort of language, reminding one of the two voices of the Australian bear—the koala—which grunts when sending out love-signals and makes piping, shrieking, child-like cries when in danger. The latter are appropriate enough, but when one knows the two voices one feels they would be more effective reversed. Also the Catalan. Forty times I thought the folk angry with me, so wild and torrential has been their speech, when I was indeed the happy recipient of their best compliments ; but when I have overstepped some unseen line of etiquette, ignored the baby, or forgotten to stand cigarettes round the table, I have had to listen to a rather flat and bantering kind of chant. There may be some method in this, for most of us can find the left-handed compliment and mock gracious word when we feel we have been injured or " done."

Catalunia constantly reminds one that it is the poor who supply the conservative element in human life. These people have an almost spiteful pride in the possession of their quaint tongue, and make pariahs of such of their own who are too lazy to acquire and speak it. We have little reliable data as to the language of heaven or any other future asylum, but if languages are passed on and the world's souls meet in common, there will be some interesting moments in listening to and learning Catalan. We have heard of the Irish

signboard, " If you can't read this, inquire at the cabin on the left." When I cannot read Catalan they tell me, with charming frankness, that there is " something wrong with my education."

Another word or two about the conservatism of poor people ; they are never the iconoclasts. For if they do at times form the mob, and sack, smash, burn a city, they immediately set to work to fashion and carry it on in the same old way. And what they specially like at home, in their stomach, on their backs, is what their mothers nursed them to and made them love as indispensable parts of themselves. He who changes his cook often can be no conservative. He who has money buys variety. He who reads and reforms, sheds some of his early faith. He who travels, learns to forget, and lives in company with the world that is near at hand. And he who helps to make the laws is the same who is bent on change ; and as all elements sooner or later fall into their natural positions, it is for the poor and the fixed communities to fight for the preservation of things old, the things which in the enforcement of what may be termed the law of enterprise or progress are always in danger of being overwhelmed.

We do not seek for " links " in large cities, but in the smallest and most isolated of towns and villages. Nor do we find any upstart language or community so full of humanity and soul-sustaining employments as are those of what we term primitive places. It is in this conservatism—this pre-

servation of the old—that all charm is found. The societies inquiring into folk-lore and ancient custom usually make a semi-private hobby of their tasks, and leave the crowd no nearer to forming an estimate of what is within their grasp.

If hell is a reality I hope it may be filled with Reformers! They have a right to their share of life, but by some slip of nature's pen they have too often been legalised to spoil their respective bits of world. It is all very well to clean the town —if it can be done—but ruin seize those who would bring it "up-to-date," and worse than ruin come to those who would clean the country also! We must all come to an age and way of reasoning when there is comfort in saying "Let be." If youth were not busy it would be bad, and as the world's most active workers are among the young we can see no wisdom in preaching idleness or indifference. What should be aimed at and secured, if possible, is an ennobling and a pleasurable task. We cannot say that all our labour is necessary, or reasonable, or honourable. Some is disgusting, much is misleading, much more is a nightmare. Some tasks are dangerous in a mean sense, others leave neither a sound body nor the means to reason, nor anything like the possession of a human and a private soul, which we must have if we are to live.

It is easy to comprehend the comparatively small set of figures—sixteen hundred millions—roughly the world's population, and to assume

that, as we know the manner of their distribution, we may at a pen-stroke, or hand-stroke, or sabre-stroke, in the voice of a nation make them all hear, act, and change, even to their very skins. Many do not believe this, but the point is that many more millions do, and did they not so believe, there would soon be the devil to pay, and, in a word, pandemonium.

So it is ignorance, absolute, widespread, and ineradicable ignorance which keeps the civilised world going and in a state of balance. It believes it can change and work wonders, which it does, in the way of change. But that is unimportant. Nothing is important which man may do. It may be necessary for the moment ; at the next a new necessity will arise. Consider what any reform has ever done ? Never has there been one which did not increase human misery. You cannot alter a people's course, or even tell them they are wrong, and make them happy. You cannot so much as increase the supply of human food and reduce the cost of it without inflicting an increase of human suffering. It must always be one section at the expense of another ; for the various peoples of the world are every moment of time engaged in a bitter and destructive war. Intelligence makes for mastery, and what shall be said of the majority who are servants ?

And the many voices, and stars to be followed ? Born of the many distinct sets of elements, nursed by their several mothers, taught to labour and

fight by their several fathers; each by his own soothsayer, wizard, and prophet, what can each be but an opponent of the other? And the Reformer is bent on blending these! We have had no Reformers who looked back. They have always made it their boast that they look forward, even though the future can never be theirs. It is as dead and impossible to them as the past, for no man may stretch his hand as far as to-morrow. Looking back, we may see that the Reformer and his Reform was another foundation, and no more. We do not build, we make no more than plans, and can arrange no compact with Time. The world within our grasp is composed of two sets of material—the face of the world at the moment in which we live, and ourselves—what we think about, hope for, and accomplish in the way of influencing the minds of our fellows, and bringing about more or less altered conditions of life on the face of the earth.

These comprehend the absolute sum of our powers. We do not increase, improve, or strengthen, or in any way provide for the race, by our building, husbanding, and conspiring one with another. And "if we look back with pride," as we so often do, it is usually to some hopelessly vulgar and unnecessary, or intensely cruel wrong which won our ancestors a victory, or gave the spoils of a defenceless people to a plundering and ignoble horde. No, the only pure and truly satisfying memories are those of childhood. If

we dreamed in ignorance we also thought no ill. Life welled up out of clean minds and warm, earth-loving hearts. Our hands had touched nothing vile, and our desires were for unselfish service in the clear, bright light of day. Given that awful thing "education," and we began to detect faults in ourselves and the world. And the world retaliated by finding fault with us; so we got drawn into battle, and have gone on wrangling, scheming, and fighting to save our "possessions," and have set aside the gentle voice of our souls which in the night-watches so often hath said, "Do not forget me. Do not leave me out of your calculations! Try and remember what you are living for!" But with the morning we forgot again, and went to hell headlong; God knows to what end! Lame, blind, blundering fools; that is what most of us are, lost in a crowd as blind and blundering as ourselves, and possessed of the insane belief that it is only by knocking down and building afresh, struggling against, and taking parcels of brainless material from each other, that we can come to decent living!

Will it ever be possible for us to see that our whole scheme, and the faults of it, are the direct outcome of our false conception of labour, and the greed, vanity, and fear of our miserably incomplete selves? Shall we ever come to see and be strong enough to make the great Reform—to be able to say and to prove that life may be lived for the splendid sensations it can provide, free

from any mad presumptuous belief that the future —that impossible hiatus—is the goal to be striven for, rather than the actuality—the means of life which exists in this to-day ?

CHAPTER XV

AT THE DEEP ARCHES

NO matter by what road one approaches it, Barcelona strikes one as unlike the rest of Spain. Few countries hold more variety in the character of their cities and people, yet there are some things common and familiar about them all. The most impressive feature of Barcelona is its newness—a modern, squarely-planned, spacious, and Haussmannised city. Happily, some of the old place remains, and this is so strong and appealing that one must hope its silent claims will be respected.

Modern Barcelona is truly splendid. One admires the architect's broad and all-providing plan —it is generous in scope ; there is no sign of any fly in the ointment, though it is in part malodorous. The radiating streets run out to catch the most effective and impressive of hills, and the vistas of the streets make perfect pictures, stand or walk where one may. The site is beautiful, has been made the most of, and stands a tribute to Spanish intelligence and capacity wherever it gets a fair chance. There are some mad things in houses and public buildings in Barcelona ;

but she must long remain the queen of Spanish cities. One cannot take it, all in all, without discerning that Barcelona possesses a fine soul. Its splendid squares, its miles on miles of great avenued streets; its sombre older parts—strong as steel to the eye—its arched passages and winding alleys; its great markets; its industrious hives of trade in infinite variety; its institutions and places of amusement; its parks, drives, and gardens; its statues and other memorials to Catalunian story and Catalunian men; the hundreds of cafés where the draught sobers and sustains, all that bespeaks strong, full life;—no beggars; no sign of awful poverty; no awful vice; no lazy hordes; no rapacious greed; no cruelty; no utter weariness—but a busy and a natural way of life, where there appears to be enough for all, and it is impossible that this should be the outcome of a degenerate or unworthy people.

I made it my business to go through all the poor parts of Barcelona, and to discover nothing unsightly or half so bad as would be found in any English-speaking town with one-quarter the population. Poor folk must present squalid pictures the world over; hunger and lust must display a more or less ugly face; but we do wrong in supposing that Barcelona is a sink of iniquity or a past-hope sort of place because a few political malcontents and anarchists have it for their asylum.

At Barcelonetta I saw the most repellent group

of humanity I have encountered in Spain. This, the marine quarter to the north of the city, is given up to the poorest class, and to a number of industries connected with the sea. Here are hundreds of hovels and mere burrows made out of the flotsam and jetsam cast ashore. There would be nothing dreadful in this if the people were compelled to observe a few of the domestic decencies. But they do not, and it is quite impossible even to hint at the animal-like lives shared by the population of this quarter.

Wanting nothing half-French, or Spanish improved, I dwelt in a narrow and heavily built street, the greater part of which was in perpetual shadow, cast by a row of deep arches carrying quaint old houses. These were such a pronounced feature that I felt an appropriate name for the quarter would be "The Deep Arches," and I had no sooner secured a lodging than I found that was actually the case. My hostess, Juana, was a bright and ready-witted little woman, and so cynical as to give every one a nickname. One of the lodgers was a prim, stumpy woman from Gerona; Juana regularly called her "La Trok"; and although I never knew what it meant, it expressed the prim, waddling little Geronese to the life.

The northern Spaniards know nothing of Leviticus, and have a habit of handling food-stuffs after it is supposed to have passed to the sacred possession of one. My neighbour at table is a great politician, that is, when not engaged in business.

He is an india-rubber stamp merchant, and conducts a portable establishment propped against one of the walls within the shadow of the deep arches. At home he is most obliging and anxious to inform me of the state of politics, and in doing so twice a day wields a power just as big as my bit of bread. It is always a big bit, but he gets all over it just the same, and I feel he has somehow got his hands inside it before I can get it inside myself. Catalan loaves are exactly like three-cornered hats, with slashes made in the dough at the corners, so that they present the most natural of curled brims. Juana cuts long slices with a bit of the hard brim to each, and it looks very like a series of hatchets with hammer-heads which she lays round the table. I do not find them instruments of war, but my political friend does, and he has a regular habit of breaking up his own slice and then seizing mine as a threatening weapon, which he will use unless the Government alters the condition of the country, and that mighty soon! One day I put my bit of bread on the other side, and Juana picked it up and slapped it down again in its former place, fixing me with a commanding eye which said as plain as day, "You alter my plans, if you dare."

At one of our arches sits an exceedingly pretty girl of eighteen. Did I not know truly, I should say she was twenty-five, her face, figure, and bearing are so well finished and womanly; so it was but natural that I should establish a smiling acquaint-

ance. She sits in the archway sewing bedticks, and her mother has a portable oven and row of flesh-pots, for she is a specialist in cooking. The neighbours take raw materials to her, or say what they want, give her the money, and she prepares the required meal. As a neighbour my custom had been sought. One day, Angelita's mother (I have no idea what the girl's name may be, but Angelita would suit her well, for she has a cherub's face), well, her mother barred my way by holding out a giant egg-cup or little red clay bowl on a long stem and foot-piece, and in this bowl was a most forlorn little custard with one phlegmatic eye of a bit of green pistachio nut. I had to smile at the toothsome morsel, and was prepared to swallow it on the spot, when I noticed its face well peppered with city or kitchen dust. So I declined, and was about to pass on when the good woman remarked, "It was a work of art on all sides and extra good in the middle," and to prove her words she turned the languid thing out on her hand! It was a clean and beautiful hand, but—well, somehow!

"Memorialistas," or public letter-writers, occupy little sentry-boxes in all Spanish towns, and write letters for all classes. I remember one in Malaga with a sign:

> "Here we write love letters in
> faultless language, and use the
> most exalted and sweetest words.
> Price one halfpenny."

Four letter-writers' boxes stand against a wall near the deep arches, and it is interesting to watch the faces of the correspondents as they give directions to the professional scriveners.

Amongst the daily visitors to our grey old street is a herd of small she-asses, snuff-brown and black little creatures, with distinctive bells hanging from their necks, quaint red cloaks bordered with yellow braid along their backs, and red bobs of wool worked in the hairy tufts at the tops of their long ears. They have also a cone or high rosette of red braid stuck on their foreheads, like a little hat, which gives them a most rakish and groggy appearance ; they seem to sulk under this as they mooch along as if saying, "Isn't it enough to mother the whole town without being made into guys and proclaimed for the asses that we are ?" For these are the milch donkeys—purveyors of the most approved fare to delicate babes and people of all ages needing nourishing food.

Nata, the result of fresh and well-whipped cows' milk, is the stock food for weakly children in north-eastern Spain. It is a pure white spume, reminding one of the frothy crown of a custard. The Spaniards mix the nata with cinnamon, lemon, and a little fine sugar, so that it has a rare delicate flavour ; it is sold at milk-shops, on broad green leaves, which are pinched up when offered to the customer in a truly Oriental style.

Whilst living at the deep arches I received this letter :—

"Murcia, 7th May, 1909.

"Appreciable Sir Carlos,

"I have received your letter of the 5th, and my answer must be, I am surprised you did not reply to that which I sent to Valencia.

"I am completely abandoned! Pepe Mula—whom you know was my friend [the actor Manuela sought in Cartagena]—has gone to Oran and has married an actress of the company. I have not paid Manuela, and thanks to her I have not died of hunger, but that is because I do not wish to be a bad woman. With the money I would have joined you at Valencia, and that would have been pleasant, but now, as I find myself abandoned, I pass the days crying and consoled only by Doña Manuela, who does what she can for me.

"I have received all your letters, and those which I send you are written by a confidant friend, as my writing is bad.

"About love I do not say a word; that would be better expressed by your side. You say in your letter you wish to give to me and not to Manuela, and I repeat if you have such good intentions towards me, if it is true you regard me with such good sentiments, please do something for me, who loves you and would be with you. Affection is shown by good actions, and I hope you will prove the same. It is not my desire to deceive you, and I ask nothing. You may send me whatever you will to relieve my sad situation, for which I would be very grateful; and at the same time you will tell me what I ought to do. I am at your disposal.

"If you send me help I will be most grateful, and will ever preserve the memory of your good action. . . . I love you, and it would be much to me to receive the favour which in all your letters

you have promised me, and which I accept. I repeat that I receive your letters, and my replies are written by a friend of mine.

" I do not go out as I am shoeless. As I am on the ground floor I personally receive your letters, and to answer you I send for my friend. If you have faith and affection send according to your bounty and good heart. I would not be able to cash it, as I have no cedula (the flourish after the signature which is always necessary), so send it in the name of Dn. Aniceto Lucio (!) as he will cash and pay it to me. I plead with you to send me help, and my love will be yours for ever. Don Aniceto and Da. Manuela send their regards.

" Receive my affection from this one, who loves you, and take you this—×

" Rosario Sanchez."

This was so obviously the work of Don Aniseto and his sposa Manuela, and here the reader may observe the misspelling of his name, that I wrote and told him he was a rascal—perhaps I said more. Anyhow, it was enough, for I never heard again.

CHAPTER XVI

A GREAT SHRINE

ARMED with the bald facts that Montserrat is one of the great shrines of the world; that it dates from early in the eighth century, and that it has ever since been piling up religious, political, and military history; that it has been a place of pilgrimage for scores of millions of solitary seekers after grace, and that down to this living present over 100,000 souls journey to the sacred mountain every year—these facts alone make me anxious to come more directly under its spell. The jagged mountain—as its name implies, rises about forty miles from the coast of Catalunia, an offshoot of the Eastern Pyrenees. Leaving Barcelona, a business-like train rushes through market-gardens and farms, skirts rivers and leaps them, trips by meadows and climbs or curves round bare and wooded slopes, and then dips again into unusually gay fields—poppy in the corn, may on the thorn by the stream side. Breadths of lilac-flowered lupins and vaster breadths of blue borage and purple veitch make the landscape sing almost aloud of the joys of spring, and the presence of the vine helps to the spirit of conviviality which reigns

in the air. Then we pass through dull red and churlish hills, where nothing more profitable than yellow broom and wild thyme have a home ; next a tunnel or two, a glimpse of higher ground, a broad green river, an altered tone in everything, a peculiar desire for silence, and the train a sacrilege, and before the feeling can be defined or refined to any special need, the mountain of Montserrat breaks upon us, the train stops, and we begin to feel small and timid and alone.

Montserrat is a giant castle of most fantastic, bewitching, and impregnable mould. It rises in almost perpendicular lines for a little over 4000 feet, and in such a way that every foot tells. One may easily see higher country, but must travel far to see anything more impressive.

It is about twenty-four miles round the base of this mass of sculptured, and at a distance bare, stone, and the monastery shows out on a precipitous ledge, about half-way up the fort-like walls. The air is beautifully light, and our first and last worldly thought here is occasioned when about five shillings is demanded for a seat on the tiny railway train which runs to the hospice.

There is a good, though frightfully steep road, and we think we might walk and save the five shillings, but are soon glad to have escaped the fatigue and to be able to sit in the train at ease and enjoy the splendid scenery which breaks into new glories at every turn of the zigzag way. We were nearly two hours in climbing to the hospice—it is

a little over five miles—all the time growing more timid and shy—a feeling impossible to explain, for its like had never been ours before ; and it was noticeable that, excepting a few young and local people, the other travellers were equally silent and compelled to mute admiration. The train bore us to the very gate of the monastery, and by this time some opinions had been formed.

Our first thoughts were of the wisdom of the fathers—those early saints, or tired, or far-seeing souls, who wanted the best in a quiet way. This shrine is literally a natural beauty and wonder spot, invested with a few splendid superstitions and much holy faith. As a place, it possesses a kind of personality. It is nature visible and audible and therefore it is very easy, since it is true, to say that here one may listen to the voice of God. Whatever appeals to, fills and delights the soul within us forbids all further reason, and, coming to a natural sanctuary like this, we are able at once to put off all fear, concern, and longing, and grow calm in the trust that we are at last at home. We had these thoughts as we climbed up and up, and somehow the blustering and sweltering engine seemed nothing less than an instrument of God to relieve long-tired feet, and bring us nearer to the goal of our hopes.

The hospice is really a small village, composed of a dozen or more hospital-like buildings for the accommodation of the Benedictine brotherhood and the everlasting stream of pilgrims. Over 1000

cells, containing 2500 beds, exist for the public alone, and, though we arrive at a dull season of the year, we have the pilgrim at the gate saying, with Christina Rossetti :

> Will there be beds for all who seek?

to be relieved by the smile of a youth, who, with familiar eyes, replies :

> Yes. Beds for all who come.

And so it proves. Thus far no sign of priest or brother, or anything monastic or ecclesiastic. A few mute attendants at the little rail platform—or, if not mute, their only words to voice the way to the booking office, where we ask admission, have our names and addresses entered, and are given the key of a cell. A youth in peasant costume gets bed-linen and a tiny towel for each, arranges the beds, tells us to read the rules, and then disappears. The rules are few and easily observed. We are forbidden to throw anything from, or even hang anything in, the windows, as the fall is often so great that a little thing would easily kill any one walking below. Another rule says we must shift entirely for ourselves, and keep the cell clean and tidy. Next, we are to give two hours' notice before leaving ; and the last rule is a plea that we will offer no reward of any kind to the resident population of Montserrat. At the first glance from the window we were inclined to be dissatisfied with our cell—it did not command the best aspect

for viewing the valley—but like a native thought came the words :

> Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room,
> And hermits are contented with their cells.

And in truth we should have been. Our cell is a simply furnished bedroom. Its actual contents are two small iron bedsteads, with ample and perfectly clean clothing ; a strip of matting on the floor, two rush-seated chairs, a small deal table, with a drawer ; a fairly large wall mirror, a light iron washstand and set of ware in sheet iron, painted white ; a flat brass candlestick, a clay pitcher for drinking-water, a small iron hat-rack, and a running curtain to screen off the portion occupied by the beds. The floor is of large, pale red bricks ; the walls whitewashed, and the window is of the French type, and runs from floor to ceiling.

The cells vary a good deal in size and the amount of light they admit, the most modern buildings providing cells with greater comfort ; but all are comparatively roomy—twelve to fourteen feet each way—and the furnishing is virtually the same for all. I have described the cell with some detail for the benefit of those who may be curious of the accommodation afforded at a popular shrine.

Before we lost interest in the cleanliness and comparative comfort of the cell, we had grown to discover a world of beauty in the wall of rock rising in front. The mountain rises like a heavenly stair

—a 1000 or 1200 feet of magnificent shafts of detached stone, each tall and broad enough to furnish a church steeple. We wished to see down the valley, but soon the inclination was to look up and be humbled. Humility does not preserve a bowed head in this place. We had it as we entered, but as the heart becomes fortified with the clear light air, the eyes open to discern new qualities in the light above. Our cell in order, we went forth to buy bread, wine, and a taper. There is a restaurant for those who do not care to buy and prepare food in their cells, but the vast majority go to a store, where all kinds of food and drink may be purchased, and the prices are very low. A large pound of bread costs twopence, and a full bottle of wine twopence-halfpenny. Although everything is so silent and free from restraint, the appetite does not grow here. All are in some way impressed with the broad fact that this is a place where the body is of little account. All the water used is direct from the rock, and although cold to iciness, it is positively sustaining.

We have a subtle desire for greater personal cleanliness, and though the air is chilly to raw cold, clothing is almost an abomination. The hands appear a size smaller, and gain in sensibility, for they are constantly grasping at friendly shrubs by the precipitous paths, and in some unusual way telling us that these are our friends, so that we come to a fuller understanding of what is about and above us, and then, lo! a sense of the sun in

our faces, and there is neither desire nor weariness, nor heartache, nor any longing, nor that state of reasoning which is pain. Perhaps these phantom-like and yet wondrously substantial hills have wrought this change in us ; perhaps it is the feeling that we have escaped the world, or it may be memory, roused by the presence of so many familiar flowers and shrubs which grow upon the crags and within the glades. The mountain, flowers, odours, dreams, one or all together, have found us, and we say again, for the words ring like a dirge or possess the fascination of a new tune, "The wisdom of the fathers ! The wisdom of the fathers ! " For it is they who have led the millions hither.

From our cell we may look out on a hundred little natural gardens, hanging with all their grasping strength to the ledges and crannies of the mountain, and where it is pleasing to reflect that no mortal foot has ever rested or ever will rest till there is an earthquake, when, of course, they will not be the same gardens. When we come to close quarters with Montserrat we pronounce it a vast rock garden, wrought by the forces of nature in their mightiest strength, designed with wondrous skill and planted to instruct, rest, and delight every eye—a garden so vast, intricate, and perilous that no one may know it or become satiated. And then the frame. It is fifty miles deep ! Is studded with eighty towns and villages ; illuminated by shimmering rivers and glittering banks

of snow, and lakes of cloud and fields of every hue. In fact, it has the world for its frame, and we pilgrims are glad to be of the Holy Mountain—alone, above, away from it all. But we trust as we do look out and down upon what has been our world ; and when we have gazed and thought and gazed till we can do so no more, we retire to our cell to discover that these material things in their strength and majesty are the actual sources of a shrine.

We who come here feel that the rocks and the very winds which blow about them are preaching impressive sermons. We think of the stone worshippers of all times and climes, and come a step nearer to the philosophy of all religions. But we are not led to pursue any fatiguing thought, for the mountain leads, and even the human story and human handiwork about are ever restful and final in the lessons they teach. Happily there has been no attempt to " beautify " and vilify the mountain, and we are always in the presence of nature. By the mountain road and principal walks there are many crosses and pieces of statuary, and also seats and fonts where sacred and profane pilgrims may rest and slake their thirst. But none of these offend ; they are of the Holy Mountain, and apart from convenience or beauty or story, keep us to the same atmosphere and mood. Just above the monastery, tucked away under projecting rocks and boulders, are many graves, but so small they could never have held complete

bodies. They are probably urns holding the bones of such hermits or pilgrims as were found exposed on the mountain.

Far away on the wildest heights, and amid the crannies of gorges, the hermit holes are, many of them, the merest troughs, and men who lived and died in these were often sealed up in them, so that their bodies crumbled on the very spots where they had chosen to pass their lives. We may wander for days and yet see very little of the mountain and its numerous ancient habitations.

The "ermitas" are everywhere, many of them in such dangerous positions that we are thrilled, scared, and fascinated by the daring and aloofness of those early Christians who elected to climb and contrive and dwell in them. These were the only spots rendering men proof against the temptations of the world; they were strongholds against the devil and the wrath of God; they defied infidels in arms, and were often the hiding-places of church treasure during periods of unrest or plunder or war. That men did and could live in these places century after century is one of the marvels of human life and human story. Even in the presence of the obvious we are inclined to deny that these slabs and vertical walls and jutting crags could ever be scaled and held by man. To-day there are no traces of the means of ascent and descent, but there must have been rope ladders or lashed spars or light timber, or bundles of faggots hung against the cliffs, most probably some con-

trivance which could be drawn up and let down at will.

And to live in such spots! The airiness and the eerieness! The stern cold challenge of the elements over every movement of time! The utter silence, except the voice of the wind and the driven rain. The ever present danger of the rocks slipping from above, or slipping from below, and they do slip at comparatively short intervals; and the limitations of the hermit's domain! They were often as much bound and cramped and frozen as mariners lashed to the look-out in Arctic seas; or between the floor and the rock roof above they passed their years in a stoop for want of room to stand upright!

Much of the stone is of flint-like hardness, and we see where, with small hand tools, they literally scratched their way into safe hiding and secret dwelling-places. And the men who did these things had often taken part in the great affairs of nations. They were of varied scholarship, and of all stations and estate. As hermits, they had neither soil nor water at hand; no certain draught or a solitary plant for refreshment, or study, or delight. They ignored the companionship of cats and dogs, and they believed so far in liberty as not to encage a bird.

Security and privacy they claimed by divine right, they aimed to possess no more. They saw the sun first in the morning, but its life-giving rays were not for them. They saw the clouds

make green the low valleys and the rippling hills, but they thought not of harvests and dry barns. They saw the long hot summers parch the plains into deserts, but no sound of poverty or pain rose up unto them. From their ledges of rock they saw the clouds gather and descend like armies to war, and mingle and disappear in the earth below. The lightning's flash and the re-echoing thunder from a hundred cavernous walls awoke no fears in them. Their business was above the affairs of earth ; their only concern for the souls of men. Down the mountain for a scrap of food, for water, and a stick for a fire. Down the mountain for flat stones or round stones, as they desired to build the wall or lay the floor. Down the mountain to tell of the heavenly lights they had seen, and the voices they had heard, the lights and the voices which we may see and hear to-day. Down the mountain to rejoice with a great company that the mountain should be found holy. Down the mountain to gird on the sword, and bless those who would march against the Saracen in the East. Down the mountain to discover and cover the corse of brother Benedict. Down the mountain to proclaim the cross triumphant over the crescent in Spain. Down the mountain for a root of the medicine plant—the aloe—which brother Juan Bautista had brought from the new world. Down the mountain to see Ignatius Loyola dedicate his sword and his life to God's service. Up and down the mountain for nigh 1200 years, and when these

exercises failed another hack and scratch at the rock, another stone this way or that, another last home prepared, another lonely death, and then no more.

Sitting in the midst of this fastness we feel that if the lives of these old hermits were not in all ways lofty and splendid, there is yet something about them which holds us to their haunts with the grip of a warm fire on a raw night in winter. We devoted one day to the hermitage of San Juan—gaining it by a modern stair cut in the rock—which is one of the most marvellous of human dwelling-places. It lies on the side of a bare mass of rock four thousand feet above the sea, exposed raw, and storm-swept at all seasons. A rent to one side has left a jutting wall many hundreds of feet high, and running across this face of iron-hard stone is a band of red sandstone from two to three feet wide. In the eighth or ninth century this band of soft stone was gained by descending a crevice, then the hermit scratched and scraped and formed a track round a terribly overhanging mountain of rock. Then he worked in and in, and made man-holes at intervals, and doubtless hung a wood rail to save himself from falling into the valley below. As the years went by the hard stone above the sand was attacked, and to-day we may in places stand upright, whilst in others we crawl on all-fours and tremble violently all the time, for the wooden rail seems nothing against our weight, and if we should lean against it or slip——!

So overborne were we by the frightful strain of gaining the end of this hermit's lair that we lay in the last semi-dark stone trough, as cold and uncanny as a tomb, and there gave ourselves up to wonder and to dreams.

Friar Juan Gari, who fashioned this retreat, and is the first historic character in the story of Montserrat, converted us to his way of thinking, so that as we lay we saw the mission and the influence of the generations of hermits. The friar himself, speaking quite audibly, said this unto us : "We took no pride in sitting in semi-darkness among these rocks. We did not enjoy solitude, but we discerned a task which enjoined it. You cannot have bad men in isolation. Remember that. It is the crowd which provides the painful sins. We had heard of Christ, and it was our duty to let others know of Him. Not of the bad, but of the good brotherhood, let us speak—those who gave Christ to Europe. He is not an Asiatic, but a European liberator and standard of right living. Here in this cell more than a thousand years ago I said—enough of your concerns which are of no concern, enough of your fears which are all for yourselves ; enough of happiness which is without reason. I will accept none of your worldly hopes. I will see you only as worms in a perishing furrow, in a world so unstable that ye never can grasp a thing and call it blessing. And without this what is anything to us ? Come not with me and abide in this mountain ; come not with me to the ascetic and

austere life. I would deny ye no splendid thing. And looking back, do ye not see that we gave ye understanding! We starved for ye; went into the deserts and the lonely places for ye; we denied ourselves for ye, and we gave ourselves for ye; we grew to be young-old men that we might come by the truth and make it plain for ye; we saw the light, and pursued it; we wept and slept and dreamed and woke to the knowledge of the way for ye. This is the story of the pilgrim and the hermit, the monk and the monastery. Out of these have proceeded the science of religion and the science of civilisation, the science of government and the science of the elements. Independent of us! Indeed! Of no account? Indeed! Whereon do ye build? Do ye except a century in the incidents of Time? Do ye accept Christ in the scheme of Europe? Do ye accept the men who revealed Him to ye? Do ye accept history, acknowledge art and live by the soul of Europe? And do ye discern any beauty or worth in these things before we half-naked and ascetic beings came? Be honest. What power gave civilisation to Europe? Was it Christ, and if so, who were His ministers? Turn back to the page and again turn back. Don't stop at the point where we grew impotent and abominable, but turn back to where we were pure and noble. In those days ours was the treasure of these everlasting hills. Our faith grew out of what we saw as evidence of God. We accepted virtue as a necessity, and discerned no

way by which men could be in all things just till we had shown self-sacrifice, open-handedness and service. And if you would deny that we gave much, what will you say we took from the world ? Ours was the cold and the lonely way, and to those who can or ever will think, shall we say more ? . . ."

When we got home that night there was no one to welcome us, nor any one to whom we felt we should tell of what we had seen and heard, for all are in the same way possessed and informed. The mountain and its story is everything, and the monastery grows to be a mere convenience. True, there is a lovely chapel, and where the services are so devotional that it is a delight to kneel through vespers extending over two hours. Two choirs, one of monks in a high gallery and another of thirty gowned and surpliced boys, sing heavenly music whilst standing through all the two hours behind a screen, and when at last they kneel round the quiet and unmistakably good priest on the floor of the high chapel, we feel that God's blessing has indeed fallen upon the world.

The whole area of Montserrat is less than ten acres, and nearly all is built over, so that there is but little garden space, and small chance to walk in the evening, since the low walls are not sufficient to save one from tumbling into space to certain death. Still, no one can be bored here. The days are so enthralling, for every one climbs and wanders from morn till night, and after vespers all are ready for bed.

The monastic day is very simple. About seventy monks make a study of church music, for which the monastery is celebrated. There is also a school of music for youths who are to enter the church. A most spiritual priest conducts the public services, and the whole institution is presided over by an abbot.

We pilgrims are expected to leave a few shillings in reward for the cell and the linen used, and it is from these freewill offerings that the great establishment is maintained. Visitors are not supposed to stay more than three days, but we stayed a week, and were told we might stay until the crowd began to press in for the summer. Montserrat is in one respect a sanatorium. Large numbers of priests and lay brothers who cannot afford a holiday at great expense, come here owing to its rare climate and inexpensive mode of life. It is also a favourite place for poor brides and grooms. For a hundred miles around the peasant maid holds it as an article of faith that her marriage will be blest if she can pass the closing days of her honeymoon at Montserrat.

The pilgrims are from every land, but they have ceased to travel hither in anything like picturesque or weary pilgrim garb. Every morning about a score of peasant women and girls trudge up the mountain road, accompanied by donkeys or mules laden with fresh vegetables and fruits, and these they spread on either side of the path we take to morning service. The comestibles make a kind

of harvest festival display, and fill us with the spirit of thanksgiving. The special attraction for pilgrims is the honey these women offer. It is just ordinary honey to the eye, but it possesses a strangely wild and yet familiar aromatic perfume, a combination of gorse and broom and wild thyme.

Our week is at an end. It has gone like a flash, and yet it has been a leisurely life through twelve centuries. We leave in the same silent way that we approach, which is most befitting, for we know we have somehow touched the highest, and that we are passing for ever from what is in very truth a great shrine.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CRADLE OF THE CID

COMING to Burgos in the spring of the year it almost takes one's breath away, so generous and storied and sweet is everything in sight. The Burgalese are the Scots of the Peninsula—a sturdy, big, and silent yeoman class—and all they do makes for effect and sober strength. They are blessed with a comparatively rich piece of land, a rare climate, and the face of the landscape is so moulded that it is everywhere beautiful. Then history preserves her links here, and there is a sense of wealth in all around. I had not been here many hours before I had written : " I don't care who is King of Spain so long as I can remain a citizen of Burgos." In many places we are charmed by pictures of poverty, but, after all, there is more to sustain in looking on a well-dressed and healthy crowd. Burgos is blessed ! It provides work for all its sons, and there is no vulgar ambition ; no awful longings or hopeless pains ; no " Incurable deep ills," as Heine wrote ; nor any lack of splendid things in nature and art. History, story, employment, a fair land, and the joy of being—these are all obtainable in Burgos.

At our fonda we were talking of the lot of the different groups of Spain, and I urged the larger blessings of the peoples of the northern provinces. "I don't know," said a commercial traveller from Valencia. "What are you to call blessing? There is the Galician, who when he has good soil,—more than he can use and more money than he can intelligently spend, moons round, an ignorant boor; and there are the Levantines, the people on the south and east who have a bit of desert for soil, a bare rock and the sea to contemplate; but the sun warms them, and they can think and laugh and be happy. Which life is best?" These are the actual words of the Spaniard, and knowing him, one can make but short comment. Every Spaniard swears by his own province, and it is impossible that he can be wrong.

The British traveller is influenced largely by trees; and where they are absent, as also trim gardens and the scent of flowers, he cannot bring himself to feel at home. It is perhaps for this reason that Burgos appeals so directly, for though the town itself is close-built and verdureless, the surrounding country is decked with glorious trees, and the river is of all city rivers the most Arcadian and satisfying.

I never knew a river to charm and delight as does this Arlanzon. Its course alone is fascinating, for it comes in from the east through broad, green meads, a number of silver streams, and just above the town gathers itself into one wide flow, and

then divides again and glides through the town under five well-formed and low bridges, then turns and goes straight into the arms of the west ; and at evening one sees a stream of all colours and degrees of glory as the light fails, and the background of cloud and sky and setting sun play and blend and enfold each other. Up the stream it is the same, for the morning light appears to rise out of the streaks of silver, and the tall, straight trees stand wrapped in silent praise, as if placed there for no other purpose than to salute the morn. And the bed of the river within the town ! It is a bed indeed : a wide and long well-garden, for deep walls bound it as it flows past the city ; and flocks of pure white sheep, little ponies, and languorous cows lie or browse upon the butter-cupped-and-daisied fields—for fields exist here, quite long and spongy meadows, intersected by streams which in spring are white with a little flower formed like a buttercup, that rises out of a plant whose leaves are kept prone by the running water. The king-cups are so tall that the little children can scarce be seen above them.

Then there are long strips of slender flag-iris, and stretches of gravel and pure sand where the washerwomen and girls gather by the hundred and lay out all the colours and garments of Burgos on the flowery meads. And though the washing is unending, the streams are clean ; no amount of soap and clothes seems to make any difference. This is due to the hurrying of the river. It falls

about fifteen feet in its mile passage through the town, so no dirt stays to be seen or realised. Nearly all the trees by the river are tall, straight, and deep green poplars, and the bridges are white and low and long, in perfect harmony with the broad, soft bed. Where the boundary-walls end there is a terraced fall and a rapid which gives off true music, and the air does not die away until it passes under the shadow of a bank of old elms, grey willows, and wych-hazel, these relieved by a sprig or two of hawthorn, a bush of golden laburnum, and a stately horse-chestnut in full flower. At the fifth bridge the river runs free and bare of trees for some distance, till a clump of trees in the eye of the west cast their long shadows and bring the play of the waters to an end.

God preserve my memory, and I can never be poor! I am nearest to perfect happiness when I look on scenes like these, and so long as I can recall them I shall have enough. I was half inclined to go on and not wait for the sunset, for I had seen it some nights ago; but the colours and the peace of the world held me to the bridge, where I saw most exquisitely perfect scenes. I wish I could paint this babbling river going into the arms of the red-gold and shimmering west! Could I do so it must surely be called "Peace." I am sitting by a piece of broken wall. Just in front the stream runs round a grassy knoll, and about thirty little white lambs, and a couple of black ones, are gracefully cuddled up for the night. Only

one is standing, and he has his chin resting on another's head. Is he the sentinel and privileged to lean a little ? Beyond the lambs the river is a shimmer of gold, and many dancing little suns are hovering over it, so that one cannot see clearly what is of the earth and what no more than light and colour.

The sun is now tipping a line of hills which turn the river, and long bright-red beams are shot up the stream. The clouds are violet, they are purple, and now again they are gold. Many gold and silver-rimmed clouds are appearing ; the foreground is clear again, and the distance all ablaze. Washer-women show at intervals all down the stream. There are many figures on the road following the open green bank to one side, but all are moving slowly as if towards rest, and there is no noise. Two yoke of fawn-coloured oxen cross the bridge. They have immense head-dresses of lambskin, with the wool drawn up like sugar-loaves ; they pull their load with a peculiar lilting gait, and the driver lilts with them. They raise a little dust on the bridge and I get the smell of it, the only link with earth and the toiling world. The stream is all silver and violet. Another flock of sheep are coming to drink, and cross the stream lower down ; the clouds so filmy a while ago are now gathered into solid mountains. The gold grows very soft, almost a russet-brown, and the violets and purples are fit for robes. The trees are beginning to look sullen and solitary ; the washerwomen are putting

their garments into huge baskets and trudging both banks towards me and the town. The only colour in the west is a broad burst of smoke-stained flame ; all the sky is leaden-grey, every leaf is still, the length of the river increases, and it begins to have a voice as there is less to see. The mountains of cloud are breaking, and the sky above and beyond is a soft sea-green. Now it is lead-colour, now purple, shot with gold. The trees are frowning black patches where they shade the river.

A distant flock of sheep are coming along a green strip between the streams, and there is a tinkling of tuneful bells. Now there is more dark cloud and light colour-spaces in the west ; all the lines are horizontal, and there is no movement away there. A cold blue-grey is hanging like a misty pall between the source of light and the material earth. Faint lemon rays appear, greyness spreads, the picture narrows on all sides, the flock of lambs are huddling closer, and there is a complaining bleat or two. The air is quite chilly ! There is nothing more to see. It is night at the fifth bridge of Burgos !

That night I was held to thoughts about the Cid, for he was born here. Genius or greatness in any form is but an accident, yet we like to associate our heroes with splendid places, and surely no one could desire a finer natal spot than that of Burgos. One evening I found myself standing on the site of the Cid's home. It is a strip of green lawn

bounding a road just outside the town. A cemetery has advanced on the site, and judging from the form of the road one imagines that the cemetery embraces the actual spot of his birth. A low monument and two obelisks stand on this green strip and hold the legend in Castilian :—

> "On this site stood a house
> wherein was born in the year
> 1033, Rodrigo Diaz de Bibar—
> Cid Campeador de Valencia,
> dying there in 1099 and his
> body translated to the Monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña
> near this city. This is to
> record the services of the
> heroic and brilliant son of
> Burgos."
>
> Erected 1784.
>
> Carlos III. King."

I stood here in the warm mellow light of a May evening till I thrilled and found myself crying and pulling at the weeds growing on the spot—chiefly horehound, blind nettles, and low silver thistles. I can account for this as I remember he provided my first romance. As a tiny boy I read his "Chronicles," and though I have little doubt he was an unforgiveable rascal, I am indebted to him for many delightful thrills and adventures. How long and yet how short and unvarying is the age of man! Children are playing round the garden of the Cid just as in his time, and a hundred

yards away there are long fleshing-troughs and doublet: leathers in the making, and men and boys contriving rude garments and accoutrements but slightly or not at all different to those of the Cid's day.

All the bridges are comparatively modern, but the stream and the form and employments of the land have not altered much during the past thousand years. So I am happy to stray and moon about, gathering pebbles from the river and wild flowers in the meads or in the more distant fields. Only in such situations may we re-live a bit of our youth. I felt myself to be in company with the Cid as a child. I gathered wild flowers and imagined the world with him ; I climbed to heights of a few feet and surveyed the world ; only the child remained to me, and I had no regrets or fears that I might be foolish. So strongly was I impressed by the natural beauty of Burgos that I ignored its art and much of its story. The Cid and the river were all in all. The place reeks of mellow history, but that was not my concern ; I needed no more than the companionship of the Cid as an innocent child.

He was married at the castle which crowns the highest hill near the town, and our Eleanor Plantagenet was married there also, and later, Wellington was twice repulsed. But these things are as nothing compared with what may be summed up as native charms. The bones of the Cid and his wife are now preserved in a large chest in the Town Hall, and there is also a terra-cotta bust of

him in a straight beard and a high hooked nose. He is garbed in a chain-mail cuirass under light shoulder-plates of steel.

The first bar or authentic yard measure of Castile is here, hence the word barra—or yard. To many the cathedral of Burgos is the gem of Spain, and I came under its spell, but too often cathedrals, galleries, and busy cities are fatiguing rather than sources of sober happiness ; and there is so much labour in pursuing those things which are chronicled in the guide-books that I have lately made it my business to ignore them altogether. The hospital Del Rey and Las Huelgas are lovely, the one a rest-house for pilgrims, and the other a convent for nuns of noble families.

Every night I walked to the fifth bridge and saw the river run on to the west, and the sinking sun take charge of it—always a new and an inspiring sight.

The Burgalese, whilst fine-looking and healthy, have somewhat irregular features, and though I met its crowds at all hours, I saw but one beautiful face. Both men and women lack the style and the charm generally found in the townspeople of Spain, but they are a very happy crowd, and there is much freedom amongst the young folk. In winter Burgos is very cold, and many of the houses have glass sashes arranged over all their fronts as a means of attracting the sun's heat. This gives a staring and common appearance to some streets, though many buildings are quaint and beautiful.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CITY IN THE FIELDS

ONE hardly likes to believe that money makes friends, it is so brutal; yet often one must give to the poor to bring out their best, and this is generally seen in their gratitude and affection when they discern they are noticed for themselves.

On leaving Burgos I gave a trifle to two servants, and they almost embraced me and followed me to the last, their faces worth a pound a minute to any human soul.

A rather churlish strip of land divides Burgos from Valladolid. Here I was welcomed by a tramp riding behind two sturdy hounds attached to a good-sized cart. The man was nursing a child, whilst a third dog and the tramp's wife were in their proper places twenty yards behind.

Valladolid is more utilitarian than beautiful. It occupies an almost dead level, though near to high and churlish hills. Its most striking features are its old houses and the church and gallery of San Gregorio. Philip the Second, husband of our Mary, was born here, and Columbus died here in a street bearing his name. The house he occupied was recently pulled down by nuns, who have

stuck up a convent on the site. At a museum are a large number of beautiful sculptures in wood by Berruguete, also a fine lot of ornaments and rare marbles, taken from old house fronts, patios, and chambers. A house stands where Cervantes lived and wrote part of Don Quixote.

The implements and utensils of this province are most primitive. The metal-ware is of good design, but the clay vessels are poor. The copper puchero — or cooking-pitcher — so common in many provinces, is rarely seen in the north-east; and in this central region it is entirely absent. Here the name is given to an upright iron loop-handled pot, of handsome mould, but inconvenient for lifting. In Zaragoza one sees pots eighteen inches high, weighing fifteen pounds, and with only one small side handle. The vessel is virtually an immense drinking-mug. Nowadays they are "founded," or cast, but in Vascongados and Navarre they are met with in hand-wrought iron. Germany is making faithful imitations of them in cast- and sheet-iron and enamelled ware, and these are replacing the more interesting native articles.

At Valladolid, where one crosses to the district of Rioseco, are some beautifully-worked mural stones, employed in paving the slope and forming a boundary-wall of the river. These stones are from old churches and houses; for they reveal medallions, armorial bearings, and inscriptions in Latin and Spanish. The oldest discernible date

is 1670—less than two hundred and fifty years ago! Monuments and rubbish! Here is rank and fame, mortal vanity, and mortal hope! A small canal traverses this province, but water carriage is unpopular, and the flood is employed chiefly in irrigation.

A remarkable contrast is observable in the faces of the town and country people. Throughout the canal and river systems, also away on the dry, open lands, the peasantry have plain, stolid, and uninteresting faces; whilst the town population of Valladolid is distinctly handsome, and several minor peculiarities are seen. The speech is low and moderate in quantity, men do not smoke to any extent when in the presence of women, and there is an unusual amount of freedom amongst young people.

By the river-side are as many as three hundred little wooden boxes arranged on legs standing in the water; these boxes are occupied by the lavanderas—washerwomen—as the banks are unsafe. The women step out with their bundles of linen, squat down and lave it in the running stream. I sat for hours and heard no more than an occasional remark. In the south and east there would have been a deafening chorus of cries, chants, and badinage, and my position would have been untenable; in Valladolid I was unnoticed. When boats are laid up on the river or canal, the decks are covered with a thick coating of damp and pulverous earth to prevent the spring-

ing and cracking of the wood—a simple and effective plan worth imitating elsewhere.

Valladolid possesses two excellent public gardens in the "Campo Grande" and the "Magdalena"; they are in the form of natural woodlands and shrubberies, and distinctly appropriate to the needs of a town population. Moreover, they are in the town and accessible. As a nation the Spaniards' private gardens are confined to the rich, anything like a cottage garden is seen only in the extreme north-west; but as municipal gardeners or owners in common they display far more intelligence than do the British; not only do they provide trees and shade, fountains, and an abundance of flowers, but seats and conveniences, which draw the population together at all seasons of the year. Of course, climate is an important factor, and we observe much needful variety in the public gardens of Spain.

But no matter where, there is more to accommodate, to satisfy, and create a feeling of possession in a Spanish town garden than is usually felt in any British public domain. Anxious to make the most of local business, a kindly old man tells me they have a fine lunatic asylum in Valladolid. The town has some queer and interesting old houses, in one of which I found a lodging. Entering by the Campillos, I dined in a room on the Calvo, and slept on a plazuela—or little square. This is explainable by the house having a roving commission to get a look at the daylight wherever

it could find an open space. About half a dozen women kept this house, they were all old maids or widows ; and instead of wearing out their lives in solitary chambers, they rented a house of a dozen rooms, and lived on those who were brave enough to call. As waiting-maids they habitually enjoy the possession of pretty names. In Malaga she was Philomena ; at Burgos, Esperanza ; here she was Candida. That was fortunate, for she was very broad, she waddled, and had lost all her front teeth, though she had a beautiful smile and was just as kind as she looked. When I asked her if she was of Valladolid, she gave me the only frown I ever saw her wear as she said, " No. I am from where the beauties come from—Zamora ! "

Valladolid can never be entirely free from dust or mud, for the surrounding country, when dry, is always getting into the air, and when it rains the earth sticks like bird-lime. But I hope this statement will do no harm to the population, for they are a thrifty and earnest people, and have worked wonders on the little good soil they command.

In Spain one never travels without soldiers, and the bulk of them are third-class—or rather they travel third. From Valladolid I set out for Medina del Campo in a cattle-truck sort of train, loaded with young soldiers, and it is pleasing to write that though we were many hours together, not a rough remark or an unkind action was detected. It might easily have been otherwise, for we sat or were

jammed about four deep ; and what with smoking, eating, drinking, and the necessary perspiring and spitting there were grounds for strife.

At Medina del Campo, a dust-laden old town in the midst of a vast plain, I went to sleep in a lane leading to the castle, and on waking found alongside me another tramp, by name Julius Langton ! This was a curious fish. He could speak several languages, and was a fluent liar in all. Still, he was interesting. He had watched me leave the little town, and finding me asleep had lain down and waited patiently till I should awake to feed him. With the intuition of his class he divined my nationality at once. His own story, in so far as it could be relied on, was brief. His father was an Englishman who had visited Portugal, and his mother a Portuguese. As a waif he had gone to sea, next tramped over many lands, learning something of each language he encountered. He was quite harmless—a real tramp, too lazy to steal or be in any way bad. With Langton I went on to the ruined castle wherein Juana La Loca—Crazy Jane—the wife of Philip La Belle was confined, and where her mother, the great Isabel, died. This castle remains an impressive ruin, and Langton and I sat down to discuss it, and a bottle of wine and some bread and cheese which I had bought in the town. My tramp friend knew as much local history as I wished ; and how vivid it all seemed as it dropped out of this unclassified human waif. I can hear him now saying, in refer-

ence to Juana, " They say she was this, and they say she was that, but God do know and was it any matter ! She have just one life and she die, and then, true or no true, it not matter to her what they say." The weather was scorching hot ; and with our bottle of wine and cool shade we felt equal to any kings or queens of the past. I am always tempted to descant on the charms of a tramp's life, because it is the only sort of existence yielding irresponsible freedom ; but I had an appointment in Medina, so when I could bleed Langton no more I bade him adios.

At early morning this market-place is a rare sight, hundreds of tilted carts and pack animals holding all the materials which the population require. So pronounced is the custom of buying in the market-square, that few shops are seen, and these but small and old-fashioned. At a stall in the market-place a bright-eyed, dapper little woman was offering tiny cheeses of goat's milk. A countryman examined one carefully, tucked it in his pocket, and put down a real. I thought the cheese a bargain, and said to the little woman, " I'll have one," and gave her a peseta, which is four reals. She beamed and gave back two reals. I remarked, " The price of the cheese is one real." " Ah," said she with a winning smile, " but you are a caballero." I enjoyed her audacity so much as to laugh and say, " You are a little rogue," and she, seeing she had beaten me, curtseyed and laughed out, " Ah, great señor mine, you are many

times a caballero!" I do not complain. Such incidents and compliments are cheap at the price.

At Medina I passed an evening with twenty ploughmen, all employed on the same estate, and one of them put a question which interested, and in some subtle way pleased me more than any other inquiry in my life. We had been talking of Australia, and its great natural wealth; the smallness of its population, and such simple facts as I felt might interest them; and when it came to my saying in what direction Australia might lie, and I pointed to our feet, it was more than they could believe. But I went on, and as the wonder grew, a stocky, sharp-eyed man of about thirty-five, who had listened to hear of everything his heart desired, said with tremendous hope in his great eyes, "Is there a God there?"

Think of it, if you can! This is a text indeed! "Is there a God there?" And in this instance I may preach the sermon. My first thought was not of what we might call this man's ignorance, for only the ignorant can pretend to a knowledge of God. What charmed and baffled and held was the absolute age and universality of the inquiry. Let me describe the situation. It was near midnight, and we had gone to see a string of twenty fine mules fed for the last time before morning. They munched in a long shed which had an open front to a yard, where were ploughs and other implements on which we sat. A clear and nearly full moon rode above, and there was neither a cloud

nor a star. The day had been sweltering hot, but now it was cold, and every face showed alert and concerned under the chilling moonlight. Cayêtano, one of the ploughmen, put the question, " Is there a God there ? " My reply may stand for what it is worth, for I said, " Different people have different Gods, but your God is in all the world." He was relieved and pleased at once, as were his companions, and the whole lot of them immediately returned to the mundane ; what Australians lived on ? How many meals a day ? Any wine and tobacco there ? Very cold ? How much did a donkey cost ? Regular work ? The reward of labour ? Military service ? And, to omit nothing, " What were the girls like ? and could they marry if they wished to ? " I put down these things only to make plain the source of the inquiry and the limitations and aspirations of the man whence it came. " Is there a God there ? " The words are perfect, and in themselves attractive. The ties of earth are many, and yet we are never held by, nor do we live by, these. It is something more than hope springing eternal, for no amount of gain and possession can satisfy, and I was intensely interested by the desire of that Spanish peasant.

No ! We need not go to primitive black people for our beginnings in faith, for we are all at the beginning. We inherit no more than a larger sheaf of straws. Our philosophers they come, and they vary, and with them our wonderment ; but our helplessness, doubts, and fears remain fixed. In

desperation we put questions to ourselves, and then set about answering them in ways convenient and agreeable to ourselves. We suffer in the hope that we may come into greater prominence, get nearer to the throne of grace, the peace of heaven, and the blessings of God.

Always blessings! Always some high power who will have compassion on us, recognise and reward us in ways surpassing any we may get here below. Below! We get much out of that word. We are far—far down in the depths of the world, and must climb for every good thing. Kings are on thrones; God is on high; heaven is beyond the distant crown of stars; every bed is possibly a last sleeping-place, and a cold sheet our coffin-lid. Most of us have come to dislike white and odorous flowers, they take us into deathly company; we reflect on the state of those who have gone, and ponder the space beyond our view and our ken, and we say in all moods save that of gladness, "Is there a God there?" The question is fundamental; it grew up with human reason, and can never be supplanted or surpassed.

No preacher can expound the law, for no man knoweth it. Fear is the mother of reason, and faith is reason's daughter. Our fears and our wants have made us, and our indulgences have left us more than ever undone. So with all we have aspired to know, we are no nearer to convincing ourselves of a certain and safe asylum. Cayêtanos' priest has a faith and knowledge caus-

ing him to kneel and wear black robes, and avoid as many ills and gather as many comforts as he can, but in his heart he knows he is a deceiver and a sham ; so that, with all his ignorance, Cayêtano is the better man, in that he asks with more honesty and hope, " Is there a God there ? "

CHAPTER XIX

A STUDENT IN SALAMANCA

I MUST have a dig on paper at Spanish bread, for in this part of the country I cannot get my knife into it in any other way. One can afford to praise it for being pure, well worked, thoroughly cooked, and digestible once it is broken up ; but the loaves are so thin, baked so slowly, and to such a degree of hardness that they would serve for roofing-tiles. And the shapes and sizes ! They are beyond count. Once I decided to make sketches of the loaves of each province, but soon found it impossible, for the baker invents new shapes for every batch.

One advantage in writing of Spanish loaves is, I cannot possibly go wrong in any description of them ; for taking a lump of dough, from two ounces to two pounds, there is not a baker in western Spain who does not produce a new shape and surface pattern every day of his life ; and, more remarkable still, each loaf has a definite and attractive shape. One morning I stood before a shop and counted over thirty shapes in one and two-pound loaves, each flat and platter-like and stamped with its weight, maker's name, parish,

and hall-mark of the local authorities. A beautifully clear die had been used, and the letters and surrounding ornamentation stood up as if cut in dull brass, for the tops of the loaves have that colour. The next day thirty new shapes appeared. In Spain the baker's art must consist in infinite fertility of design.

I bear a grudge against Spanish bread, since I snapped five excellent teeth in as many months. I was a tramp during those months ; but paying my way I am no better off, in fact worse off, for it is a dainty compliment to give one the most snappy piece of bread. Foreigners often ask what kind of macaroni they are eating—strips of bread, tough, slippery, and delicious, and for once in the proper place—in the soup. At a market stall in Salamanca, a tired-looking woman bawled, "Aqui el major pan en el mundo"—Here is the best bread in the world. I paused to watch her ; and she, brightening at the prospect of a sale, held up a loaf and smiled. I shook my head, and she let the bread fall wearily with, "The gentleman doesn't eat bread !"

At Salamanca I lodged with one Paul. I might as easily have shared the house of one Simon a tanner, for Salamanca has no end of fleshers, curriers, and leather dressers, and their establishments are included in the tiniest of domestic habitations. A street by the Tormes is made up of cottages, each with a small yard and pit or two, large enough to hold a few skins and keep a man

occupied. At every door is a heap of spent or new tan, forming an everlasting playground for the children. The street reeks of tan and lime, but these are wholesome and welcome odours, for the general surroundings are very dirty.

Parents not knowing what to do with their children should send them to Salamanca, for here is a college named "The Providential"; here also is an attractive retreat for any friends of Bacchus, for in the Calle Prior is an inn named "El Rapido."

At a second-hand shop I asked the woman how many years she had owned a jug. "Go along with your years," said she. "How many centuries have I had it, and there's a fault in my memory how many."

Most of the Salamanca colleges are in ruins, though built as late as the seventeenth century, and their collapse is not due to the employment of weak stone, but to shoddy and unprincipled methods of building. The walls are run up of rubble and mud concrete, with a mere facing of sandstone, limestone, or granite.

Cold as is this region the whole population gets up with the sun, and I imagine this custom is bred out of the chilliness of the bed. Rich, poor, and middle-class are alike up and about soon after daybreak. The marketing is done very early, for there is a deep-rooted belief among the stall-holders that it is fatal to refuse the first offer of the day, hence the thrifty housewife goes or sends

to market early, that she may make a good bargain. In the south and east many things are bought from hawkers at the door, but in other provinces every woman has it a part of her faith to attend the morning market. They are good judges and never shy of driving a bargain. The market-baskets of Salamanca are enormous affairs, holding up to two bushels ; and some have little wicker cribs inside them to protect eggs, soft fruit, or such things as might be crushed or spoilt.

The housework in any part of Spain is not one-tenth of that which is found necessary in England. First of all there are no fires or fireplaces, little or no furniture beyond what is necessary, no ornaments, carpets or rugs, and a general indifference to dust. Floors and stairs are of stone, brick, marble or tiles ; there is no scrubbing of anything beyond kitchen utensils, and nothing can possibly be out of place and call for rearranging. A maid does all she finds necessary to one or two rooms in an average of about three minutes. Most attention is paid to the sweeping of the floors, and in whitewashing, for wherever the Moorish influence has spread this practice amounts to a passion. A dog or donkey cannot enter the house, or even pass up the street, without the women-folk seizing the whitewash brush and flying to paint out any spots or signs of untidiness left by the intruder. Windows are few, very small, and seldom cleaned ; in many towns there is practically no glass, for shutters and the reja—iron guard—are most com-

mon. The only house in which I thought there was enough light was at a blind asylum at Tividavo!

From a knoll at Salamanca one can see nearly fifty miles north and west—one vast garden of rolling downs, composed of fairly good and permanent soil. This region has for centuries carried wheat, barley, and rye, and is the ancient granary of Europe.

The feast of Tajares—a village near Salamanca—is worth visiting for the curious types of humanity to be seen there. The province claims a type named "The Charro," the men and women who preserve the oldest provincial dress. It is a very elaborate costume, the skirts of the women in the form of circular aprons, and the materials and colours vary much. The stockings are most beautifully hand-worked linen-thread, or silk, but always white; the fancy-work is made of jewels, lace medallions, and flowers, and almost entirely surrounded with little silver and gold sequins. A great many jewels and rings are worn, and the head-dress is an embroidered handkerchief (not a mantilla) more than a yard square. The Salamantinas claim that this dress suits every type of face and figure; it is too expensive for everyday use, and is sported only on festive occasions, but the men's, being more practical, is in general use to-day.

Tajares is the home of "Our Lady of Health." She dispenses that blessing on the fifth of June.

The road to Tajares showed thousands of country-folk, mounted and on foot; but not one hat or bonnet in all the crowd. Handkerchiefs, chiefly black, but some coloured and tied in the simplest fashion, were worn over the head by most elderly women; but the majority were bareheaded, excepting that they were protected by fine crops of well-dressed hair. Most of those on foot carried yard-long candles. Every horse and mule on the road bore two or more people—a man and his wife and their babe; mother and daughter; sister and brother; or father and daughter sharing the same mount. It is surprising how cleverly the hind seat sticks on to the bare sloping rump of the jog-trot animal. The donkey usually carries but one person, excepting mothers with their nurslings, or three or four children tied pannier-fashion and carried in the alfora—or pannier-bags—on the donkey's back.

At this feast several men dressed in the "charro" costume furnished no end of delight to the crowd by their playing and tom-toming of rude dance music. Each player had a large wooden whistle with a broad mouthpiece and three little key-holes at the opposite end, so that he held and played with one hand; with the other he cleverly beat a deep side-drum and strutted about with as much display of pride as a Scotch piper. The music and the tune is like one hears from the native peoples of north Africa, something between a drum, a cymbal, and a tambourine led by a piping reed.

This dancing on the west of Spain is evidently very old, and one has only to watch the performers and the merriment to see the beginnings in civilisation. The couples stand up flicking their fingers, and flit about before each other like so many dazed May-flies ; one cannot say they do more, for they neither speak nor smile ; and there is another sign of age in this dance as the man always leads, the woman looking at his feet and imitating his movements as best she can, with the result that she is always a little behind time.

All classes are drawn to seek health at the feast of Tajares, but the crowd is made up chiefly from the small towns and pueblos within a day or two's journey. Some shepherds and goatherds were here in complete rigs of leather, wool on the skin for jackets, leather breeches laced at the side, leather caps and slippers—hat to heels, all self-made garments from the skins and coats of their flocks. Beggars do well at all feasts, for no matter who the patron saint may be he must open the heart. Hence there is no end of vagrants, whose rags and neglected frames are often repellent. The most primitive type of woman here is very small and mean of feature. She is in no way bad or vulgar in appearance, but almost monkey-like in expression. The faces are dark brown, and much of the hair is brown also, black being the least common. The better class of countryman is a fine type with extremely open and frank manners.

I came here for information, and, if possible,

to gather wisdom, but though the schools are disappointing, there is something to be gained from my temporary lodging. I have one Rosario for cook and waiting-maid, and after two days or less she is madly jealous of another servant, the mistress of the house, and some women who live on the same floor. Their room is a secret place, and it ought to be, for it can hardly possess windows, though goodness knows where they cannot put them in Spain. I have seen them in floors, and have been asked to believe I could get sufficient light out of a looking-glass, and though one may do so at times, "the sun's the thing," as Shakespeare should have said —and would have had he known me. Anyhow— and it is so built—this house is about ten rooms and cribs deep, measuring it backwards, and the back is another man's wall, and he is mean, and will not let in any light without payment. I have the first room, whence the light comes. The rooms off the passage behind me have doors with a bit of glass in them, but mine is a solid door, and so I shut out all that may be called light. I am ingeniously told to close my window and open the door as "more wholesome," but in this case I am selfish, stern, and silent.

But I began with Rosario's jealousy. It is most pronounced, and if I don't mind she will "drop" me, and then I may go hang for my tea, shaving-water and such other luxuries as she alone can provide. She asked me if I were "free," and of

course I said Yes! So was she! She has been a a widow for two years. It might easily have been twenty-two, for she bears no trace of having loved and lost. In brief, she proposed to me in half a dozen ways, and I had been there but forty hours!

The other woman told her I had the "retrato" of a beautiful lady in my room, and up Rosario came to know the meaning of it. I had forbidden the pair of them to touch or even come near my writing-table, so Rosario stood off and affected a curious yet very complimentary laugh at the portrait. I went on writing, and said, as if shaping a word for the paper, "sister," and she, imitating my voice to a nicety, "Ya lo creo!" (You'd better believe it!) She is a good sort, and truly human, so I could not be angry or annoyed. I humoured her and said the lady was a dear friend, and somehow Rosario was pacified, but I know she said in her heart—as all women do—"It can never be the same again!"

As I wrote, the second woman came to square my room. She put both elbows on the table beside me, leaned over, picked up the portrait, and said scornfully, "What is this?" I answered her as Rosario—a friend. "Your novia" (sweetheart), said she with a challenge. I laughed, but said nothing, and she went on, "You are very kind to carry your friend round the world in a sack"—for so she phrases my bag and baggage. I say it is my custom, and she caps it by saying it is a custom of all the world.

This Salamanca crib is a corker in the matter of distance from the world if one wishes to get there in a hurry. If there were a fire one need not hesitate to drop, for it is barely twenty-five feet to the street, but to walk along and round and down a bit and up a bit, and round again, and then back and then down and then up two steps and then down a flight, and then corkscrew somewhere, and then along—but which way I don't know—and then a glimpse of light and a smell of the street, and then back an exasperatingly long way and into utter darkness again, and then turn and go down four steps, and then into a long passage with a peep-hole at the end, and I walk towards it and discover a piece of glass in a door which opens like a charm if I pull it very hard, and lo, here is daylight, and I am in the street!

Now this is no exaggeration, but a description of the puzzle-house I am lodged in in El Corrillo, Salamanca. Any one doubting this narrative had better come and see for himself. One has to write "himself," because women do not travel alone in Spain—or at least, not for long, and with all the Rosarios it is a miracle that any men do.

I used to wonder why puzzle-houses were built, but I now conclude it was because the builders grew puzzled over the work and struggled out of the affair as best they could. Then, in Spain, there is the fixed habit of willing parts of houses to different members of the family, and each section

doing its best to be independent of and walling off the other. As I have pointed out earlier, my little friend near Malaga has half a kitchen and all the fireplace. Her jealous sister-in-law will not use the fireplace, but she owns the whole of the doorway. My friend Trinidad is beautifully clean in her domestic habits, but the sister-in-law never sweeps her share of the floor space. On the other hand, she uses her share for a fowl-pen, and the " pen " is plural—a number of portable cages, and they nearly always bar the door. Trinidad asked me, in all seriousness, if I thought her relative who so willed things could ever get out of purgatory, and if so, would he be sent upwards or downwards ?

I pointed downwards, and Trinny smiled towards heaven.

Two exceedingly neat and good-looking sisters occupy a big room at the back, close under the eaves of this house, and one of them has a lover. This poor wretch has to ask permission to go through a house at the back of ours, in another street, then he has to climb through a shed skylight, cross two or three rickety roofs, and at last perch on a little sentry-box building beside which flows a malodorous drain, and there he divides his time between balancing himself, holding his nose, and sighing love's old song to the stars and the lady above.

I am told, for, of course, I do not know, that girls living three or four stories high have a hard

chance of getting and holding a lover, but I incline to think that even in their case the difficulties of meeting will not prove insurmountable.

Where the Spanish girl can have no window or screened door near the ground, or within reach of the lover's eye or ear, her parents will usually ask for a little light to be let in on the subject in the shape of a " speak and peep " hole in the wall or in the door on a landing or stairway. I have never seen a maiden peeping out of the holes in the walls, which are made to serve for chimneys, but the peculiar position and size of these holes makes one half suspect they are made to assist love at a pinch.

Rosario is intensely anxious to serve, befriend, and interest me. She is short and plump, and has alert black eyes, which twinkle when they catch mine, and I see her brain working to divine what would be an attractive topic with which to regale me. Sometimes I see she is in trouble with herself, and then I try to help her. One day I told her of what I had seen during a country walk, and it was plain as day she was making a mental pilgrimage during every step of the way. Then I said, " Oh, where is the battlefield ? " and her face became a poem of pure delight, for she was able to instruct me !

She turned round two or three times in order to get up the necessary steam, then, pointing with two outstretched hands and her head thrown back, she almost laughed out. " It's here !—here !—

right through the wall!" "Go along with you; it was not as far in the town as this that the actual battle was fought!" "Yes, yes!" she exclaimed in frantic joy, "it's here; the same!" "But what battle do you mean, then?" "Los gallos" (the cockpit!), which was really next door, though I had been inquiring for the site of the battle of Salamanca! I was booked to leave at four o'clock on a raw morning, but Rosario sat fast, like a faithful spaniel, on one of the many stairs, and there shivered till it was time to call me.

I offered her a little money present, which she took shyly, and then, armed for a final effort, she said, "What do you want to leave me for? Good-bye, and for six months! Mind! No more!"

CHAPTER XX

THE PLEASURES OF THE WEST

I HAD not been well at Salamanca, and my indisposition brought me no end of friends. They proved the kindest-hearted crowd, and, although a stranger, I was treated with something like affection. I have no wish to forget Rosario's dark eyes ever looking up and asking what she could do in the way of service. Marianna was equally kind, and I believe she will live long from the health-giving effect of telling—as I heard her about ten times a day—that she had danced with an English caballero on the kitchen floor!

After all, I found the battlefield of Salamanca, for I journeyed to Arapiles, and saw the two ridges occupied by the allies when the fight ended. A column on the highest ground where the Duke was hit by a spent bullet commemorates the battle. In a certain book, Thomiere, who led the French, gets killed off early in the day and badly wounded at the close! Thomiere would excuse the error and be glad to see it that way.

South of Salamanca the country runs poor till one reaches the Sierras de Grados. These mountains rise to over eight thousand feet, and carry

heavy snow with here and there steep faces of rock, and gorges black as night from the cold sweat of the snows thawing on the sunlit heights. I met one little wolf here, and he was by far the most timid of us, for he scurried up a long, bare slope, where, out of range, he crouched and surveyed his enemy. After climbing to a cold and windy height a train bore me through a tunnel and out on the southern side of the mountains, where all was in entire contrast to the bleak and sterile hills and wild plains of the north. All the south was forested with ash and oak, sweet chestnuts, walnuts, and giant cherry trees in full fruit and covered with leaves of great size and most delicate green; and looking down were hedged and walled fields, peasants garnering hay, and villages of red and white perched on crags and tucked away in blue hollows among the hills. And further on were valleys streaked with streams; gay orchards, and little plots of ripening grain; and far away were glinting rivers and mills and grey towns peering through heated mist and arcs of rainbow light; and to one side of the world were gathering clouds, and the threat of storm, all exactly as in a Turner picture. At the height whence I moved the air was pure and invigorating, but the scene was so vast and strong, and good, and all so lovely that it produced a real pain of heart. It took fully two hours to descend to the hot, dry plains towards Placencia, and over all the way I was treated to the most beautiful natural scenery and

charming of peasant homes and employments. The people are of medium size, clean and intelligent ; a true mountain type. The Portugal oak grows wild in this region, and the pink—small, but truly pink in colour—is so prolific as to smother the rocks on which it grows. The mulleins are tall, branchy, and more decorative than those of northern countries ; the colour, too, is better—a deep orange to a rich sulphur-yellow, and the flowers extra large.

The main traverse line of these mountains, known as Tras de Sierra, is broidered with tiny lane-like fields, winding between the rocks and gorges, supplied with rich red soil from the heights above. The haystacks are built round poles stuck in the ground in the corners of the hedged and walled enclosures. From the centre pole others hang round like the ribs of an umbrella, and by their weight keep the stack proof against rain and wind. A bunch of green oak boughs, which has for a penny or more been blessed by the priest, is tied on the top to keep off the evil eye and the wrath of God.

No land offers more complete contrasts than Spain. This region is not merely beautiful, but in an agricultural sense rich and inexhaustible, and all its people busy and content, yet fifty miles south, on the low, hot plains of clay, and the shingle and sand-drifts of ancient rivers, the people are hopelessly poor and the villages pictures of abject misery.

Casceres was my objective, and for no more definable reason than that it was the birthplace of Doña Maria, the great lady with whom I shared a summer in the valley. Round Casceres the country has a starved and churlish look, but it contains some excellent grain lands, is famed for the pigs and bacon it yields, and has grown into prominence for its phosphate and lime deposits. Here, again, one sees the widest contrast in the types of people and their habitations. The country-folk are small, but beautifully formed, quiet, and gracious ; but there is a group at Ourdes who are known as savages, as they live without love or licence, and have an unenviable reputation for thieving and cunning.

Casceres rambles over two or three gentle hills and hollows, and is immaculately clean. History sayeth that several hundred years ago Estramadura was almost depopulated by a plague. As much may be said of every city and region of ancient renown. But plague or no plague, Casceres is to-day clean enough to deserve to escape every form of contagion, for there is not a dirty street, house, individual, or garment. At first I thought they had heard I was coming, and furbished up the fronts, feeling sure that the crowds would prevent my seeing the backs ; but no—for the houses have no backs, all sides butting on to streets or patios which are pictures, clean and pleasing.

The town is a veritable museum of old stones,

and the stones are of the everlasting kind—hard, grey, mica-spangled granite—and where they have been leaned against, rubbed against, and blown against, and sun-scorched, and trodden under foot for a round four hundred years they have not lost the marks of the chiselling and hammering they received from the hands which wrought them for the building and paving of this old place. Judged from any standpoint this is a rare spot, and one sees how much depends on the raw material available for the building of towns.

I used to blame the Spaniards and other southern people for making bad bricks, but now I know that it is largely a question of fuel. They can make the finest of tiles, because their thinness admits of proper baking, and where they have the fuel they make good bricks ; but the mere trash of the vine-yards, olive-groves, and brush-covered hills holds not the heat necessary to make heavy and hard bricks in all regions ; this is why so many houses and towns look ramshackle and ruinous.

Casceres holds fuel and clay which provide beautiful terra-cotta, coarse kinds of pottery, and very hard bricks ; but with wealth at command, granite was used to fashion this city, which, built four to five hundred years ago, may stand another thousand and show no more than a dignified age. The Moors built here, but their soft brick and concrete and adobe erections were mere trash beside the grand old houses of their conquerors. Granite Casceres dates from the discovery of America.

Pissaro and Cortes were both of this region, and nearly all the fine old houses were reared by pioneer families who returned wealth-laden to this part of Spain. The Moors left a fine feature in the little pepper-box towers, and the Spaniards have improved on these by converting them into chimneys, so that they are the most distinctive and pleasing feature of the old houses.

The women of Casceres have remarkably even features, and some are perfectly lovely. Three distinct groups are seen, ladies, middle-class, and peasants, and not the slightest sign on the part of those below imitating the dress and airs of those above. The general appearance is Andalusian, but shorn of its astuteness and caution ; the walk is firmer, owing to a more invigorating climate, and the eyes and hair are not black, flashing, or melting in the semi-theatrical way of the southeast. There is a good deal of freedom given to women, and no cynical replies are made to honest remarks—a pronounced and unpleasant habit of Levantine Spain, where women desire compliments, but doubt their sincerity. Hence their language and attitude often border on the offensive where one feels one has spoken in good faith.

In Casceres is no sign of business ; no one seems to desire more of anything. As a community it is self-contained, and there is no competition or concern for the outside world. The children have intelligent and happy faces, and the little crowd which fills the main street and the plaza in

the evening and far into the night are so attractive in all ways as to be worth a pilgrimage to see. Then one is helped by things absent—there is such complete rest, such proof of the means to live without strife and desperate energy. In the poorer parts the street scenes are quite Eastern, for the walls carry devices in palm branches and dragons, and the black hand, which keeps off the evil eye, is drawn in charcoal on the whitewashed walls. Then the women carry everything on their heads; pitchers, baskets, bundles of wood, washing, market produce, poultry and hawkers' wares of all kinds are carried aloft. The favourite drinking-water is drawn from a fountain to one side of the town, and at all hours a stream of women and girls go to and fro with immense pitchers cleverly balanced on the side, when empty, and borne erect on the head when full. The pitcher borne aloft improves the carriage of the head and body. Grace of movement left the English when they left off wearing the sword. So long as there was a weapon to take hold of, an enemy was possible, and some occasion for alertness, a fine stride and set face. The clanking and the care of the weapon imposed certain movements, all graceful and indicative of courage and strength. Neither the staff, stick, nor umbrella have succeeded in maintaining a good carriage.

I verily believe that man looks his best when conscious that he has genuine enemies and a weapon about him.

The pitcher-pad is a heavy ring of black, red and yellow flannel plaited to produce a square pattern. A loose loop hangs from this over the neck of the wearer, and it forms a distinctive head-dress, many going about the house in seeming unconsciousness that they are so adorned. The loop is brightened by two or three yellow rosettes, making it as much of an ornament as a convenience. The hair of these water-carriers is all done alike, drawn straight back and coiled high as a wisp that it may act as a support for the ring and the pitcher. The local ear-rings are of gold and Moorish in design, though the people say that they passed into Spain from the neighbouring country of Portugal. Every girl's ambition is to earn a pair of these huge ear-rings; they cost ten duros, or nearly two pounds, and lace-making is the most certain means of acquiring the money. Many women and girls go bare-footed; one elderly woman said she had never worn foot-gear; consequently the feet are large, but all have very graceful figures.

I had expected Casceres to furnish some interesting interiors in the way of fittings and utensils, but its primitive character attracted the northern curiosity buyer, and he has done his work well. Every house and shop has been deprived of all light and transportable materials, and refitted with stuff made in Germany, America, or elsewhere outside Spain. Excepting food-stuffs, almost everything found in the houses and the shops hails from abroad. The dress of the well-to-do is

a mixture of English, French, and German, with a tang from Madrid, and a braiding from Morocco ; thus Casceres is a strange combination of things new and old, but it possesses the charm of quiet born of a genuine indifference to outside concerns. An impressive shrine is found at the Virgin del Monte ; a series of granite crosses mark the way, and a little church is built out on a ledge of rock. There is also a rough amphitheatre in the open air, and a wrought-iron pulpit, whence the canon of Casceres preaches a sermon at the feast of the Virgin in April.

The people of Casceres impress one as unusually good-natured. It does one good not to feel obliged to die with a poor opinion of human nature. At Casceres, because the cochero told me so to do, I beat down the posadero fifty cents a day, and he retaliated by placing on my plate food of far higher value than the money I was paying him ! Then they gave me the best room in the house and got in a boy specially to look after me. I own to hating the boy ; he was good-looking, clean, but all too attentive, too beastly kind ! He called me " Little gentleman," and not infrequently " Poor little fellow."

I was not very well, and taking heavy doses of quinine to keep off a cold, but I felt more afraid of the fever which raged under the patronage of this boy. The hostess was exceedingly kind, and a good cook. She had a baby two months old, and a little girl of three or four, and when I realised that

I was little less than a parasite in the house I went forth and bought shoes and cap for the baby, and sweets and a doll for the little girl. There was nothing grasping about mine host and his wife ; but the boy seemed to scent the Bank of England in me, and he never failed to point out the contrast between his own cotton garments and mine, which were of wool. Like Maria, he found fault with me, or rather with my shabby clothes—he told me that his figure would set off any clothes of mine, and he would do his best to preserve my memory after I had left Casceres. This would be an idle tale, save that he told it in a way that was at once exasperating and irresistible. Every time he put a plate before me he would, with his fingers, sample its contents as a proof of its genuineness. In some circumstances I would have cleared him out, plate and all ; but I confess to falling under his spell. He had an audacity that was for once good to see. He would put his arms round my shoulders and hug me, telling me I would never grow fat unless I took his advice. As the meal drew to an end he would fetch his own plate from the kitchen and, sitting opposite, show me by speech, gesture, and genuine action how to put away a square meal. Towards the end of my stay I grew to dislike him cordially, and yet I felt he was good at heart, so I surprised myself into giving him the clothes which he had set his heart upon.

CHAPTER XXI

A PILGRIM'S DOLE

AFTER wandering over Portugal I went on to Galicia, entering Spain where the Minho forms the boundary between the two countries. An estuary runs inland for about twenty miles before the river assumes its fresh-water character, and the scenes around this estuary are of great beauty. Much of the land runs up into high natural towers of rock, and some of these are castle- and fort-crowned. In the more generous lowlands are handsome private houses, and domains and comfortable farmsteads by the hundred peep out from among woods of deep green. Where the country is more open the grape-vine clambers, or there is corn or meadow land. Thousands of cots, red and white, are dotted over an immense sloping area, so that it appears to be under a summer snowstorm. Here and there are little towns and villages, and about them are more fields and woods. Roads and lanes wind temptingly across the hills, and man is everywhere busy among the crops. On the wide watery plain, ships are gliding or lying idle in the little bays ; and out towards the west some craft have

their sails set and are flying with golden wings in the face of the sun. Many little black and sun-warped boats lie in the shadows by the shore. There are jetties, ferries, bridges, fishing-villages, and near to each a patchwork ot cultivated land and glistening lines where the crops are receiving irrigation water. All the untilled land is covered with flowers, and there is a hum of bees and flies, all of which proclaim it summer-time. And, should we doubt the fact, there are many tired husbandmen and women, and innumerable donkeys, mules, goats, and sheep enjoying rest in quiet shade.

One needs no more than time to see these things and then to say, "Life is good." So after a day spent in complete idleness at the mouth of the Minho, I went on to Tuy, where the scenery was possibly more lovely.

From Tuy to Redondela, which is near Vigo, the road makes faint with too much sweet; no mounts and hills, trees, and floods have ever combined to make a more perfect natural garden. The highest country is bare—all the soil washed into the vales, where boulders project above tall trees, and yet for some reason they look no more than pebbles. The people put their houses alongside these enormous water-worn stones, and often paint and whitewash them in parts till one has to look carefully to make sure which is the boulder and which the house. Then they train vines over the house and over the boulder too; and either

paint or put wood or stone crosses on the houses and on the boulders too ; also, in growing their trees and vines and maize they produce schemes in colour and form of which the boulders are the essence ; and so we get a series of pictures which probably have no equal of their kind in Europe.

These Galegans employ the same materials as the Japanese, and are stone-worshippers. The green lakes of maize and rice rising out of the sludge of the vales are also of the East. Above them are terraced fields and quaint wooden houses embowered in vines, wistaria, and honeysuckle, all rank but splendid. Water is heard at times, but seldom seen, for it is so well guarded and kept to use that it flows almost everywhere under dense vegetation ; but all is so green, so jubilant and tense with life, one wants no more. It is the greenest of green worlds. The thrift of the peasants is so pronounced, they provide no yards or open spaces near their houses and arrange their stacks of corn round high poles ; and towards the end of summer the stacks are covered with vines, so that there is not an inch of exposed and unused space. One may go through scores of villages and little towns, and see thousands of isolated cottages and all their inhabitants toiling amid this wealth of green.

Redondela is a paradise of a town when seen from a high bridge which spans a ravine. It is broken into sections by the inroads of the sea and

the outpourings of the torrents from the local mountains. From the high bridge one looks down on castles and crags, lines of cottages, and tiny islands which appear as slumbering mammoths in the land-locked bays. Then there are streaks of river water, salt reaches and coves, and, at low tide, marshes with hurrying and draining streams without number. I came down a hill road to see all this in a flash ; and as I looked, the variety and the glory grew, until I was almost sick at heart ; and, as a short way out of the difficulty, I cried, and then was happy, and began to see more, and wonder more, and to take deep breaths. I felt there could be nothing in the world worth grieving about, for I stood in the presence of the beautiful and the best. Involuntarily I said aloud, " I can make a home here," and it is well if we make such utterances at times, for nothing can be more comforting than to feel safe and at home. It was two hours to nightfall, and I went on by the old town and the streams, crossing these by high bridges all bathed in a mellow and joyous light ; and just as the sun sank behind deep purple hills I arrived at—Arcade ! Accidental or implied it is well-named—a little town by river and seashore, with a long, finely arched bridge spanning the inlet by which it rests—a grey rookery on a steep hill-side. Far above rises a mount supporting a cross, some towering cypress and white stones to mark the pilgrim's way. Women shrimpers were wading to their waists in the salt water of the

narrow streams, all anxious to get home to the bosom of their great mother before the night should come. This evening revealed a truly golden west; whilst a band of purple lay across a range of southern hills.

And so from one glory to another I passed till I reached Pontevedra, which, if not exactly the home of the gods, is an attractive spot for a travel-tired, hungry man. Surely, the little unsought things provide the great comforts in life. Pontevedra water makes one's skin feel like silk—with little or no soap any dirt falls away, and the body is swathed in a strange smooth exhilaration. I never laved, towelled, and combed my hair with such downright pleasure. At first I attributed this to the relief of a long and crowded day; but no! morn, noon, and night, the water was a luxury; and on paying a second visit the charm seemed greater than before. The water is conducted in clay pipes from a spring in the hills. All metal conduits destroy the pure freshness of water.

This town has a population of nine thousand, and though it is old-fashioned and quiet it provides more solid entertainment than most British communities with ten times the number of people. As usual there are several clubs and public cafés where good music may be heard the year round, and the price tuppence-ha'penny! Here is a programme :—

CAFÉ MENDEZ—NUNEZ

PROGRAMA

Para Hoy 16 De Julio De 1909

1. Cuando el Amor Muere.—Wals.
2. Paragraph III.—Sinfonia.
3. Pagliacci.—Fantasia.
4. Una nit de Albaes.
5. Marcha Larenna.

The discomforts associated with Spanish travel are due chiefly to the constant changing of the meal hours, the food, and the water. At Pontevedra, breakfast is supposed to be served at one o'clock, and dinner at nine; but they are never up to time. One evening it was eleven before the dinner appeared, and as there was nowhere to go after this late meal, nothing remained but to sleep on a full stomach. Many of the small farms and vineries hereabouts look like graveyards, for granite is split into long shafts and used as posts to form pergolas for the vines. The Spaniards of this region resemble British islanders, their physique, dress, and employments are all like our own. Moreover, they play football and cricket, and their outlook is towards the north rather than to their Spanish relations in the east and south.

This part of Spain has some excellent roads, and the scenery and general attractions are so varied that it is well worth the visit of the motorist. In

summer the climate is lovely, and the roads quite equal to the need of those who travel for something more than the exhilaration of rushing through the air. Spain is no place for those who would hurry; and no matter where one would learn, to enjoy he must go slowly; thus far I have met no motorists who have seen, felt, or come to possess anything by their travels. They made too much pace.

Always a pilgrim, I turned towards Santiago de Compostella, the greatest of Spanish shrines and for centuries the sanctuary of the Christian world. St. James is said to have arrived in a cockle-shell on the coast of Galicia, and carried on a mission in Spain. In the eighth century his bones were found in a wood on the site of the city of Santiago. A bishop was fortunate enough to make this discovery; and creating a shrine, it became the most renowned in Europe.

To tell the plain truth about Santiago, it is in few things remarkable; the cathedral and some other ecclesiastical buildings are certainly magnificent, and as much may be said for some of the streets. But though the site is picturesque, the setting does not inspire devotional feelings. Commerce has long dominated the place, and there is an alertness and money-making air about it unusual to Spain. Chimneys, of an immense size, rise above many houses, running up like roofless chambers, and all black because beyond the reach of the whitewash brush. In shape and proportion

these chimneys are distinctly ugly ; they are mentioned only because chimneys are rarely seen in Spain.

I came here for the feast of Santiago, and got it in the form of a piece of bread, for I was promptly clapped in the lock-up. I had found a lodging, and was prowling round when a town guard inquired, "Pregunto yo ?"—I ask. I answered satisfactorily, but the town guard was a fool, and took me to the carcel—lock-up. The King was expected, and I was regarded as a suspicious character who might have designs on His Majesty.

The heat at the time was sickening, and the carcel so cool, clean, and airy that I was glad to be there. As they took my pocket-book and pencil from me I was unable to write, so I enjoyed a rest and fell back upon similar experiences ; but the only one I will mention coincides with this.

Two young German mechanics decided on a working holiday in Spain. They imagined they could get employment in the principal towns and earn enough to enable them to see the country. This is quite impossible, since Spanish workmen are competent to do the work of their own land ; and unless a man is called for some special task he should never persuade himself that he can earn a bare subsistence by hand labour in Spain. But the Germans had the courage of youth. They went to Barcelona, which was cosmopolitan enough to provide them with a few weeks' work, and then they started for the south. For over four months

they wandered, visiting scores of towns and hundreds of villages, carrying a good-sized pack and keeping a splendid face. They did any number of little jobs for the peasants, in return for bread and keeping their hands in trim ; but not a single penny did they earn over all the long journey between Barcelona and Seville. Here their luck changed, for a man engaged them at once. They were half-starved, hard, sun-browned little men, who stood more in need of a week's good feeding and complete rest than long days of hard labour under a southern sun; but they had great pluck and entered on their task at once. They had one good meal, followed by four or six hours' hard work, and then the police came and without any parleying marched the pair of them off to the carcel ! Here they were kept for a fortnight, and given but the meanest of vegetable soup and a bit of bread every twenty-four hours. And their offence ? The King was coming to Seville, and they were foreign suspects ! The King came, and the King went in the course of three or four days ; but as it took a week or more to discuss the event, the poor Germans were forgotten and confined for a full fortnight ; then told they were harmless, addressed as " gentlemen," and invited to " Go with God ! " I met them on a road more than two hundred miles from accursed Seville, and in all the land they had found no other job. They were making back for Barcelona by the Mediterranean coast route ; and after describing some of their adven-

tures, one of them ended by remarking, "He had had enough of Spain, and would be glad to get back to Europe!"

For myself, I had no fears in the carcel of Santiago. When I had grown cool and refreshed I made a noise and demanded to see some authority. There is no scarcity of this commodity in Spain. The Spanish ego is the biggest thing in the country. A sergeant came and wanted to argue, and tell me I must obey and be silent; but I would neither. I demanded a higher authority. He said, "I am the highest"; and I, "No, you are the lowest." In fear and disgust, he brought a glorified kind of clerk, and when I had sized him up I demanded some one higher. It was then the inspector's turn, and fortunately for me this worthy was on hand. He told me to be "pacific," that the best had been done for me, and that I was quite safe. But I did not want to be safe, and I would not be "pacific." I demanded to see the alcalde—the mayor—who is a direct government official and vested with far greater powers than our own representatives. My audacity annoyed the inspector; but he was at the same time fascinated by it, for Spaniards love courage, and even braggadocio captivates and beats them. It was now evening, but still hot outside, and the whole crowd of officials conversed of the danger of appealing to the alcalde until quite sure there had been a natural termination to his siesta. But as they could not confine me beyond hearing, I kept

up a running fire until a civil guard was despatched to the house of the alcalde. When he came the situation changed at once, for he knew me! At a southern town I had been taken to a club, and had talked with some of its members. The alcalde of Santiago chanced to be there, and we recognised each other at once. There was a good laugh on both sides; he called me amigo—friend—and all that remained was to drink each other's health in café.

So I got my liberty, but during the remaining days I was constantly appealed to by police in uniform and civilian dress with "Pregunto yo?" This was most unusual, for though my wanderings in Spain run to many thousands of miles, and though I have been imprisoned over and over again, and as frequently taken for a spy, I was never before subjected to this running inquiry from the police of a city. I can recall at least half a dozen towns where I have been visiting at the same time as the King, but my familiarity with the crowd and the customs has allowed me to pass unchallenged.

If the feast of Santiago is always carried out during such sickening hot weather as I experienced then, it must test the zeal of the religious pilgrim. Talk of a shrine of salvation! the idea of hell must have been invented here! Pilgrims of all types have come in thousands, and during the daytime they wear an expression of fear, so intense is the heat. This may be but a heat wave, for the popula-

tion is sturdy and masculine. Ford condemns the women of this province for looking like hags at thirty ; I wonder they are not hags at thirteen, for they are drudging continually, and in this withering heat they are the only folk on the move —women hawking fruits and fish, driving pigs and donkeys, carrying enormous bright steel water-vessels, and sweeping the streets. These are the Amazons of Spain. One cannot accuse the men of being idle, but their employments take them away, and all the hard work is done by the women. One notes a masculine form of competition amongst them too, even to arguing for first place with the pitcher at the well. Slave-like labour imposes untidy habits, and there is little display of pride in the arrangement of the hair and dress of the poorer class.

I have often had to complain of the Spanish pig ; in Santiago he is my nearest neighbour.

Mazarelos, number seven,
May to many a soul be Heaven;
Certainly the handmaid's pretty,
And she charms with eye and ditty;
Likewise she is sweet and kind,
A merry maid to love inclined.
She gave me every need and favour,
And vowed her service beggars labour.
She praised me for my gracious smile,
And thought me like her Queen—no guile!
And though she may be wrong to blazes,
I do not care what he or she says.
This girl, she felt she spoke the truth;
So God be thanked I knew such youth;
But here I meant to say no more

That just as many times before
I came to lodge and sleep with swine,
Or lie awake and hear them whine.
For och! and at my very nose
And round about, and near my toes,
The pigstye wrack and odour flows!
It's just a custom, nothing more,
To keep pigs on the basement floor;
And if the pigs complain and swear,
They place them further up the stair;
And my complaint brings, "Lawks-a-mussy,
Why are you foreigners so fussy?"
So here am I in pilgrim guise
Sleeping between two foul pigstyes,
Which if they do not make me sick
Will drive me onwards pretty quick!

. . . . . .

God bless the little pink-cheeked girl
Whose lip has such a roguish curl!
God smooth her pillow many a year
And keep the pigs from scaring her!

Lovers may walk alone in Galicia, and in the towns well-dressed men are seen strolling with peasant maidens who come to the feast in the simplest style of dress with a pale yellow or white handkerchief tied over the head. A little shawl over the shoulders is brought under the arms and tied into a bow at the waist, whence hang two long tails. This type of peasant is always seen with a pigtail or flat plait of hair.

When three people are walking together it is a compliment to be forced into the centre position. In a Santiago street were three elderly fat and pompous men, forming a triangle, bowing, and

pointing with great animation at the spot of earth between them. As there are no strangers in Spain I came up with, "What's the trouble?" and all said in chorus, "The fault is that Don So-and-so won't take the middle." This was not news to me, and I had the rudeness to laugh and to say, "How silly!" Then they all turned upon me with indignation, and, "Oh, yes, you English, you take anything!" Then I laughed again and called them friends, and as one fat old chap got up alongside me, the other two walked behind; as couples there was no occasion for dispute.

I can say no more than that I have seen Santiago, for I had no fine feelings there, and where one does not feel one does not live. The patron saint of Spain might easily be accommodated in a hundred places far more beautiful and hallowed. The town is quiet because the streets are too narrow for wheel or pack-animal traffic; in fact, there are no animals except the pig, but him we smell, if we do not see him, everywhere. The prettiest thing I saw was a church procession of little girls dressed as brides, and carrying candles tall as themselves, which melted and tumbled about under the hot sun. A band of three bagpipes and two little drums supplied the march music. There was little in the picture excepting that it was very old, quaint, and appealing.

Society foregathers at Santiago as a health resort and place of love- and merry-making; fully twenty thousand handsome men and women, all beauti-

fully dressed, may be seen promenading through the cool evenings and far into the night.

Any true pilgrim arriving at feast time might write :

> "From all these eyes and *fan*farago
> Save me, O Lord, from Santiago!"

For it is truly Fashion's shrine, and the crowd worships this goddess. The few earnest pilgrims are unseen, and the church bells, processions, and hogsheads of holy water are as nothing to the fireworks, bands, and jubilation of those who come for pleasure. Night after night I went out in search of something which would quieten my soul, for I was disturbed at finding so much worldliness at this reputed greatest of shrines. But seek as I would, I could find nothing to reverence ; nothing mysterious or splendid, holy or blessed.

No pilgrim to Santiago but seeks his compostella or passport. This consists of a gold or silver medal, with a figure of the cathedral on one side, and on the other, St. Iago on a prancing horse, with flaming sword beating down a host of infidel Moors. When it was a custom for all devout Catholics to go on pilgrimage, wills were often drawn to the effect that should the heir fail to make a pilgrimage to Santiago and obtain his compostella he would be disinherited. As customs die hard, more especially in Spain, no visitor to the shrine but seeks an amulet. The medal is bought in the town, then carried to a priest or higher dignitary, who, for a consideration, which he styles " a regard," blesses

the compostella and its owner. A cord is attached, and it is supposed to be worn evermore round the neck.

Other medals show the tomb of St. Iago lit by a star; others bear St. Iago's cross; one is in the form of a concha—shell—with the Ano Santo—year of pilgrimage.

Out of this legend of the shell-boat of Santiago arose the custom of ornamenting the habits of pilgrims with shells, but the race of eccentrics is practically extinct. A solitary beggar does a trade in the precincts of the cathedral by parading in a ragged brown cloak overlaid with shells, with a band of them about his neck and round the brim of his hat.

A farmer said, whilst scratching at a bit of sour soil, which I remarked needed a rest. "Ah, señor, is the land to rest that I may starve? No; there is no rest for anything in Galicia!" Although so attractive to the eye, Galicia is poor, and labour is limited to the valleys, which hold but little good soil. The hills and mountains are irretrievably bare; and if the farming methods are old-fashioned, one does not see that there would be any solid advantage by modernising them.

In their domestic habits the Galicians are not so clean as some of their neighbours; but that is because they are not so well off, and water is scarce, or dear, which is the same. The country villages are composed of low stone cots or hovels; nearly all are detached. The people are of medium

size, well formed, and never a mean walk or hard face is seen amongst them. The women wear their hair in a wisp, pigtail fashion, or with two narrow plaits behind the ears; none of them have any fringe or foretopsail of a striking and alluring kind. They are more like the Cornish and Welsh peasantry than any other people. These are the reputed boors of Spain, but they do not deserve the harsh name. If quiet obedience to the laws of nature has made them willing, uncomplaining slaves, one may call them boors and fools, but they are neither; they have plenty of sense, and know that little is gained by growling and opposing. From one end of the province to the other, one discerns nothing boorish or distinctly objectionable; they are so hard worked as to have little or no spirit left in them.

CHAPTER XXII

BY OUR LADY OF THE ROAD

AFTER the fashion and worldliness of Santiago at feast time, one is glad to know the peace attendant on the banks of a beautiful river. The Sar is worthy of this name, the Minho and Sil even more so. I traversed the last of these for some hundreds of kilometres, and though I gathered nothing of a striking character, I acquired all I needed in a sense of security and time to commune with myself. The Sil whirls by bare and rugged mountains, through highland plains, and halts to form reaches in numberless gorges and little vales. Villages are few and far between, and thousands of square miles are seen without sufficient natural wealth to develop and maintain anything approaching a town. It is about two hundred and fifty miles from Vigo to Leon, and throughout this distance only Orense, Ponferada, and Astorga may be classed as towns, and they are but small. The villagers are primitive and unalterable, for in such a thinly populated and rugged land there are no means of change. The costumes are but necessary garments, for it takes some means and pride of place to evolve a local dress. Throughout the

region drained by the Sil there is little soil, excepting the scour and drift deposits it has made.

The villages are built largely of wood, for chestnut trees are common in the hills, and rudely hewn timber is arranged to form wide eaves and hanging verandahs. Most of the roofs are of black slate, or are flat stone slabs. There is no order in the building of houses or villages ; but a state of disorder at once stupid, untidy, and charmingly picturesque. The churches are laughable, groggy little affairs, built by the villagers without consulting architect, history-book, or their own intelligence. All are small, some are the merest cots. These quaint churches bear evidence of great age, and wear a truly hallowed aspect, so grey and sleepy. Where soft-baked tiles have been used for roofing, they are coated with dark reds, gold, and deep brown mosses and lichens. Whole villages present no other colour than that of golden-brown velvet.

The homes are wretched, but viewed from a distance they are restful and charming pictures. The people are heavy, silent, and reserved. They live by collecting timber from the mountains and the produce they contrive to raise on the flats and banks by the river. A peasant of the Sil may own hundreds of little plots amid rocks and by the stream. One sees solitary vines, chestnuts, cork oaks, or half a dozen maize plants, growing out of a cranny of some high peak, and often a few stones are piled or a pole is hung to indicate the owner's

bit of landed property and to provide the means of his getting up and down. The signs of struggle for life are often so terrible that one thrills with the fears of what has to be endured. The river runs almost dry in places where the land sucks up the flood for irrigating, then it drains off to become a stream to fertilize the strips and flats further down.

Some glorious mountains are crossed, skirted, and threaded; and one gets a taste of all the seasons on any day, for the valleys are like ovens, and the high peaks perishing cold.

The only sign of the *genius loci* are in the tracks which intersect this region in all directions, the old pilgrim ways whence men went to and from Santiago, and the more beautiful sanctuary of El Vierzo. What mad men they were! Yet none of us can afford to put them off; the world had been so flat and hard and meaningless without them.

Throughout these north-western provinces a singular feature is seen in the maize-sheds, chiefly of heavy stone, but sometimes of timber. They remind one of Japanese summer-houses, as they stand on four massive legs and have roofs with wide, overhanging eaves. Maize is liable to injury from damp; and as this grain forms the stock food of many village communities, maize granaries are as numerous as cottages.

At Celanova, near Orense, is an ancient sepulchre containing the bodies of Ilduara and Adosinda, the founders of a church. Their tomb is sup-

ported on four pillars, after the fashion of that of San Torcuato, one of the companions of Santiago ; and at Oviedo may be seen the Camara Santa, a little chapel which is said to be the second oldest building after the Moorish invasion. It was built by Don Alonzo El Casto, in 802, as a receptacle for the sacred relics which had been translated from Toledo at the time of the Moorish conquest. The sarcophagus is raised from the ground to preserve the relics from damp—I quote from "Murray"—as it seems certain that the maize-houses have grown out of these ancient tombs and sanctuaries. The priests and pilgrims acquainted with the tombs would spread the information concerning their shape and usefulness, and to-day thousands of maize-houses are of corresponding form. Any one pursuing this subject will find the best granaries in wood and granite near Pontevedra, along the Portuguese frontier, and between Ponferada and the head-waters of the Sil.

Round Orense the country is open and contains some very good soil, and further north, where the great plain of Leon begins, there are all the natural materials to provide a sturdy yeoman class. This district is held by the Maragatos, a strange tribe who bear little resemblance to their neighbours. A good deal has been written about them, but no clear account has been given of their origin, dress, and social customs. They are in many ways different from the Spaniards around them. They live in villages destitute of design or order, have

no sense of beauty in their homes; and, where villages have stood for hundreds of years, there is not a single tree, flower, hedge, or wall, excepting where needed to form a yard. Every house is like its neighbour, a rude square pile of dull red mud or of sun-dried bricks, standing out on open plains —it is hard to distinguish a Maragato village from an acre or two of hummocky land. These are a stern, thrifty folk, devoid of all concern for anything more than daily bread; and as they use up everything as they go along, have no means of building or planting for effect. At first sight one would read the Riot Act over them for not doing more in the way of improving their land; but climate is seen to be a stern arbiter; even the summers yield some bitter weather, and the winters must always be hard. Life here is a continuous fight against perishing winds and long seasons of snow and cold rain. At harvest time the scenes are enchanting, for the wheats are of the red-straw and red-eared types, and cover a boundless world with red gold. Practically all the labour is by hand, and the bulk of the harvest reaped by women and girls, who are shapely, even-featured, and clean, if we except the red dust or mud which is ever about their clothes.

I am not bent on describing cathedrals, but I should be selfish if I neglected to say a word or two on that of Leon. I went early one morning to be thrilled, and I know that my face was radiant for hours after. I had but one regret—

that all peace-seeking souls were not there to share the experience with me. A Japanese has said, "Great art is that before which we long to die." At Leon one feels that both the soul and the body are safe, that one stands in the sanctuary of the world, and that there is nothing more to be done or feared. I cannot tell how this glorious pile possesses, moves, and rejoices. During my first day at Leon I visited the cathedral three times, and the next four. Time after time I sat down to write, but ever with a feeling that I was presumptuous, committing an act of sacrilege. To me the architect has long been the world's great artist. He of all men creates, subdues, and satisfies. We can reverence buildings more than anything else which man has made.

Leon cathedral has had its interior entirely rebuilt, and one is glad to discern that real love lay behind the modern architect and builder's work. On entering this house of God one is convinced that one has stumbled upon heaven. The proportion is perfect, the walls are light as cobwebs, bejewelled with the most effective and abundant display of stained glass. So overwhelmed was I, that I gasped and went out; then returned and went out again, because I could not help speaking aloud. "This is a holy thing!" "I have found the holy thing," I kept saying—and it is holy! Man may hope to see nothing more religious, deified, and soul-satisfying.

Leon cathedral is a vast open chamber, but one

realises that it is filled with the Spirit of God. All the walls are of glass, framed with clusters of narrow columns. The centre-piece of the eastern window is all lemon-gold and celestial-blue, with a little ruby, green, and white; and when the morning sun floods the vaulted space with rainbow beams, one feels able to tread them up to heaven. Surely there can be no glass to equal this? Near to the high chapel there is a tomb to Ordoño the Second. His effigy lies behind a grill or light iron screen. When the sun shines through the east window, it shows Ordoño's head on a rose-red pillow, with a veil of amber over his face, caused by the sunlight shining through the grill. Anything more artistic would be hard to find.

Here, with gladness, I did what I had never done before—put hard cash into a Romish money-box! For at the gate of a side chapel I see, "Limosna Para la Virgen del Camino"—"Alms for Our Lady of the Road." This is my chance, for I am eternally on the road, and with much to be thankful for I must needs make offering. I want to pay as far as in my power for the blessed privilege of being led in safety over the long road to this holy place. I am sobered and tempered by what I have seen and felt, lost and longed for in the past; now I know where is beauty, food for the soul, and the thing all-worthy. Pilgrim, wherever you are, set your face towards Leon whilst it is day!

For the first time I sat down to write within a cathedral, for I had an almost passionate longing

to describe what was about me, but I was dumb! This thing is to be felt; and feeling one desires repose; any kind of effort is a waste of precious time and an insult to the claims of one's soul. No need to go into details—in one sense there are none—for with all the lightness, grace, and colour are no obtrusive vanities, tombs, or brazen ornaments. The form and colour make a monument of glory; one wants to sit quietly under the spell of it. Here I worship colour for the first time. Till now I had discovered beauty only in form, but I recant as this colour uplifts me. I try to discern what it is that makes this such a lovely church; call it the perfection of the stained-glass style or light pointed Gothic; but this means nothing. Cathedrals are like human beings—some are all outside show; some the embodiment of vanity; some nothing more than coarse ignorance and superstition; but some are lofty, grand, holy, filled with the Spirit.

This is Leon. It is alive and it makes one live. Talk about subdued effects!—no need for darkness or even shadows here. It is four in the afternoon of a bright midsummer day, and the light is streaming through—how many thousand feet of coloured glass? There are thirty-four immense windows, and forty-two only a trifle smaller, besides several rose, star-shaped, and other forms in the recesses. The nave is about three hundred feet long, and so open that one can observe most of the glass walls from many view-points. The

colour of the stone is tarnished gold. Could there be a better frame for these wonderful pictures, each distinct, yet all merging into one great flood of holy light.

One day three Americans, hard-featured, commercial-looking men, were walking round; and one, a man about fifty, turned and inquired somewhat angrily, "What do you think of this?" To which inquiry I made but a faltering reply; then he bit his lips, looked round with a perplexed stare, and after a time said, with inexpressible sadness in his face, "I have made a mistake!" No doubt! He realised that here was to be discerned the great business. We get our best lessons out of churches and such spots on earth as compel us to reverence; and so I say again, Pilgrim, wherever you are, turn your steps towards Leon!

Leon is the cathedral, but should one desire more, there are the great walls which run to fifty or sixty feet in height, and are, on the authority of my own measurements, in many parts over twenty-seven feet thick. The market square contains a few fine old houses which have their verandahs and windows ornamented with strips of hand-beaten ironwork, held in place by large rose-headed, hand-made nails.

The bread of this province is in the form of immense flat cakes from six to eight pounds in weight; and the cheeses appear to be made in drain-pipes, for they are long and narrow, and not unlike so many fat arms lying on the market stalls.

Many rude wooden implements, forks, harvest rakes, bullock bows, and animal collars are to be seen, and the one-piece clogs stick up on high heels with a notched cross-piece under the tread. The faces of these clogs are often well carved and painted in colours. The clay vessels and utensils are very attractive, the colour a deep red, and the forms varied and novel.

The dress of the Leonese women is quite plain, all wearing black skirts or prints with a handkerchief over the head ; but the Maragatos who come to market wear very short dresses in colours, and show puffed and quilted knickerbockers. They wear large ear-rings of a curious shape, and the older the woman the more is she bejewelled. The Maragatos wear a peculiar silver wedding ring. The faces of the market-folk are good, and all are quiet ; no one pesters or bawls, shows temper, or any sign of greed.

Motherhood. In the market-place of Leon a woman was suckling a baby tied within her blouse, and another little thing was clinging to her skirt. She was offering two live rabbits, and pressing their merits by saying their insides were worth a lot, as they were heavy in young. All would be eaten! But do we not make much of unlaid eggs ? The Spaniards call all such things eggs, and praise them highly. I don't know how many little mysteries I have swallowed.

The Leonese use a curious meat-dressing bowl, which they call a picadera—bit-holder. This is a

well-turned wooden platter, with a round block left in the centre, so that it looks exactly like a mushroom. This vessel is most useful when making sausages, and for preparing salad and other vegetables.

Leon stands out on a great highland plain, surrounded by rich wheat lands ; and far away are mountains cold and white ; for when not under snow they are grey, hard, and uninviting. One may walk round Leon in half an hour, yet it holds this wonderful cathedral ; and it is well to consider that it has been entirely rebuilt inside, and half restored on the outside, from funds raised by this small community. Happily, there are no trams here, or any street traffic on wheels beyond a rackety bus or two. Where trams come people begin to shout and quicken their pace, and all grows wearisome. One walks in Leon from morn till eve, and hears no more than the jangle of a mule-bell, a donkey's clattering feet, and the clogs and wooden-soled boots of the peasants.

Some complain that Leon does not go ahead, but where is it to go to ? It depends on its great wheatfield, and whilst that provides a decent life of a quiet kind, it leaves no room for the speed of vanity and the lust for gain. The Leonese are very clean in their dress and domestic habits, and, which is more remarkable, the poorest streets are clean. As an ancient town it boasts a few subtle and mellifluous odours, to which it would be the height of impertinence to object.

CHAPTER XXIII

NOW ALL IS DONE

THE road from Leon into the Cantabrians is almost British in character, for large trees are met with in variety, and there are tumbling and lazy streams with pollarded willows and little fields walled or hedged about with hawthorn and briar roses.

As one ascends the pass to the Asturias the fields get smaller, and thousands of hay, corn, and potato plots give a sense of sufficiency and security to the homes along the mountain-side. Then come forests of chestnuts; and where the surface is rocky, isolated trees. The beech, ash, and oak thrive in the Cantabrians; nearly all are moss-grown, or have a wealth of ferns or moisture-loving vegetation at their feet.

In the midst of this scenery I fell in with a market-woman and a priest holding an altercation, she abusing him in the most audacious manner because he had told her she would be damned unless she supported the church. I had thought it impossible to hear any one, and especially a woman of Spain, so outspoken. But this comes of being born in the mountains; and in spite of the

Catholic boast that its religion changes not in place or season, there are wide contrasts observable in priests and their congregations as one moves up and down the world.

Viewing Asturias from the heights the country is most varied, passing from the arctic to the subtropical, as the eye surveys what lies between the highest peaks and the coast. Towns and villages, rivers and cataracts, bridges and fords, forests and fields, winding roads and railways, appear to show Asturias a rich and beautiful province. One may travel for days through the richest of woodlands under bowers of chestnut, walnut, and beech ; and meet whole villages and thousands of independent cots stuck up on stilts, for the climate is unusually damp. Hayfields and maize cover much of the low country. Even railway travelling is a delight here, for the lines run along narrow drives, and trees in variety meet overhead and within reach of the hand. The country between Noreña and Arriondas is exceptionally beautiful ; every kind of scenery is met with, from the softest and most seductive to the wild and terrible.

To reach Covadonga one leaves the main road at Arriondas and journeys for about fifteen miles up a valley, like the Wye, but more varied and attractive. A busy trout stream tumbles down this glade, and has for rival a little tramway with a snorting engine which carries pilgrims to the shrine. I got here in a warm, calm evening in July to find hay in the

making in high mountain fields, and flocks of black and white sheep folding on the slopes and in the valleys.

Covadonga is overbuilt ; if it were more natural and the hospitality more casual, the pilgrim would be better pleased. The village is composed of a few cottages at the head-waters of a stream. Above is a well-built, but garish church ; a monastic set of buildings occupied by the presiding priests ; a large modern hotel, and the old-fashioned hospedaje — pilgrim's rest-house. For conventional comforts the tourist puts up at the hotel, but those seeking the atmosphere and subtle blessings of a shrine find the more modest and primitive hospedaje the better place. The great annual pilgrimage takes place in September, but one gains most in the contemplation of the glorious scenery—the whole region constitutes a vast church in the open.

My first delight at Covadonga was fleshly. I wanted a meal, for beyond a small cup of chocolate I had not broken fast for fourteen hours. At last I sat down to six or seven courses, with good wine, excellent black coffee, and a neat maid to " finish the cup," as she termed it, with a suspicion of fine brandy. But the dish which appealed most was new to me—veal and ham rashers spiced, rolled, and baked. Try it, ye gourmets !

Seldom a shrine without some curious or especial food. At Covadonga is found a dulce—sweet—known as " angel's hair," composed of finely

shredded melon boiled in sugar and with the appearance of silken threads in clear honey. The flavour is not pronounced, but delicate ; and in this soft, light, purging air, it is truly angelic. Trout is abundant ; the fish are brought alive in buckets of water from the stream to the kitchen. Large dishes of trout are put down at almost every meal, and as they are cooked with rare skill one does not easily tire of them. The bread of Covadonga is delicious, and distinctive in shape and texture. Within, it is smooth and white as a cracknel biscuit, the crust a pale yellow, sheeny, and without a crack. Half a pound of dough is rolled into a strip, and the knobby ends are brought round to resemble the heads of two tired little goblins lying across each other.

The next day was Santiago's, and I was roused at five by the clanging of the sanctuary bell. From my window I could see the pilgrims and a few very fat and sleepy nuns in grey trudging off to Mass. The world was then cold, the air steel-blue and wonderfully calm, the noise of water falling through the hills the only sound—for the region is of limestone pierced with caves and underground rivers beyond counting.

I cannot begin with history. I must find my place and fill in the chinks ; neither the historian nor the romance-maker can help till I have found something of myself, so I came to Covadonga unprovided.

Ignoring the guide and the history-book, I

started up the mountain through the largest and most varied natural garden, thinking as I went of the uses of money ; and in the end it appeared to be of value only where it purchases that precious thing, privacy. Here one is private. I can get no mail or other communication. I cannot, if I would, touch or look on the world, and it cannot touch me. That is my highest joy, that I am beyond the reach and press of the world. And as if fearing that I should be discovered and dragged back, I climbed and climbed till I could no more, for the country became broken, and I had to tack and wind through passes and little mountain fields ; by brakes of hazel and beech ; scale limestone crags, and on by strips of soft green lawn and patches of wild flowers growing above long grass. Man makes hay in the crannies at these heights, and all the crops had not been cut and carried to the homes below. I paused under many a natural castle and gateway of rock, where splendid masses rose or leaned together on the mountain-side. I leapt the torrents and drank from dripping stones and calm, arrested pools. I tired, I rested, gathered strength, and must needs go on. Hills were below and above me, and valleys near and far ; trees of deepest green stood solitary, and woods and waving lines of green showed their joy in a succession of warm, moist summer days. The highest peaks beckoned, promising a story and a rare scene, so I went on.

I fought with the humble-bees for the honey

within the throats of the large purple flowers of the wild nettle. I gathered nosegays and sniffed and chewed them as a child, and child-like threw them away. Where the ground was sure, I chased little blue and brown butterflies, but without reason, for taking me for a Franciscan they settled on my hands. I drank more and more water, for the air lightened with every step, and there came that longing we have in mountain heights to be washed and pure. I rolled up my sleeves and let my arms sink to their elbows in an icy pool held by the ooze on the mountain-side. Then I lay on a mossy slab and felt it would be better if I lay beneath, in the conviction that there I should be undisturbed for ever. But freshening, a supple ash-plant waved in my face, and all the hard years slipped away. I made me a whistle with a high plaintive note like that of a wounded bird ; so I took a thicker piece with a lip which almost filled my mouth ; this had a full, challenging sort of sound and stimulated me to a quick march up the mountain. I climbed, I blew, and I laughed at my childishness and pride in small things. Then I came into the presence of the great, for I arrived at the summit of what proved to be the highest peak for miles around. It was no great height, four thousand feet or so ; but all in sight of it was mine !—to the east, mountains and mist ; to the north and the south, mountains and mist ; and towards the west, the light of the setting sun. Far below lay wonderful valleys, castles, trees,

and fields, and the shrine of Covadonga ; around me swept buoyant and sustaining air, which said to my soul, " Rejoice, thou art free ! " So I sat me down on this crown of the world ; and, looking round to see nothing I feared, there, with the rude pipe of my making, I blew out the song of my heart !

Covadonga, like the rest of its class, came into note as a sanctuary and place of pilgrimage in the eighth century. A book on the inventions of the eighth century should rival those of the nineteenth or this twentieth. Covadonga owes its origin to the beatification of Pelayo, the last of the Goths, who overcame the Saracens in this valley. According to tradition, his body lies in its holy cave. The remains of Alonzo the First, and Favila, both of the eighth century, are also buried here. As a shrine this ranks third or fourth among those of Spain. Santiago stands first, then Montserrat (the only one with a soul), El Pilar of Zaragoza, and Covadonga. The Escorial, though comparatively modern, was once a popular shrine, but its historic associations, splendid paintings, and other works of art have made it more attractive to the tourist than to the devout pilgrim.

Other shrines of Spain are El Vierzo, San Miguel, near Ronda, and El Virgen del Montana of Casceres.

Pelayo worked wonders at Covadonga, killing more thousands of dusky Moors than the narrow defiles could possibly have held ; but all to good

purpose, so far as the faith was concerned. And then, because this was a lovely mountain-girt valley, with rocks carved, fretted, and piled like castles about it; and because of dangerous crags and overhanging cliffs and torrents of icy water; cavernous pools; natural wells; underground rivers and streams; glacier-like faces of mountain sweat; splendid trees, delicate flowers, ferns, and mosses; and because the wind shouts and sighs up and down the vales, and round the crags, making melody within the fluted shafts of the rocks; and because upon the heights there is always cloud, mist, and the commanding finger of God; and because man cannot look in any direction without fearing and wondering, rejoicing, dreaming, gaining courage, trying to get into touch and harmony with nature; and because beauty pays handsomely whenever it can be caught and held for sale, those astute old chaps, the Spanish Fathers, said one to the other, "We must not neglect this good thing! Come along, I pray ye, with St. Pelayo. Lo, here is a cave and a stream on the site of his battlefield, and the scene of his great labours. Let us magnify his suffering and the splendour of his deeds, for, verily, we may say whoso cometh hither to witness shall find his reward." So between begging, borrowing, and high romancing, they found a tomb for Pelayo and, his body and coffin not wanting, the business began. As this happened in that very good time when the world lived on miracles and pilgrimage,

the story of Pelayo and the splendours of Covadonga soon proclaimed it a notable shrine. We cannot object to that, for in feeding the bodies of a few, the monks and their legends and labours satisfied the hunger of the souls of many.

A neat sandal is worn by the mountain-folk of the Cantabrians. A piece of white or buff-coloured green hide is cut to the shape of the foot, crimped round the margin, and sewn with a broad white leather lace, till it looks like the curled edge of pie-crust. These sandals are worn over a black or brown felt sock and tied with a heel and ankle crossing of green leather. In the low country, wooden clogs are worn. One may gauge the primitive character of the Cantabrian Basques from the fact that whenever it rains they take off any foot-gear and go bare-foot. These mountaineers are the brownest of Spaniards; their climate moist and never very hot, they expose themselves to all weathers. The boina, which every man wears, is in the form of a tam-o'-shanter, but so small that it leaves all the face exposed. The women go bare-headed or use no more than a black handkerchief. One rarely sees a fair person in this, the reputed home of the Spanish Goths; but many fair, red, and tawny folk are seen in Guipuscoa and the valleys under the Spanish Pyrenees. A few curly-haired people are met with round Gijon, the like of which are to be found in no other province. There is little that is strange in the Spaniards of

the northern coast, they could pass for British islanders.

When one has seen Spain in all places and seasons one must believe that the people of the north coast have the best of it ; their climate is less rigorous, nature is more beautiful and more bountiful ; the sense of life is stronger, and the risks and dangers they encounter are those which improve and mellow the soul.

The women along this coast are of fine physique and perfect slaves ; though doing every class of manual labour, they are not pulled out of shape or roughened by it. Women load and unload ships, control farms, fishing, everything, excepting the mechanical and skilled handicrafts. There are many facial types, but all are much alike in disposition. The timidity, caution, and noisiness of the south is not apparent, but instead there is a French manner without the brightness and sense of order ; the modern architecture, too, is French in character, and many words are articulated in French form.

Bilbao is the finest city of its size in Spain ; it bears a striking resemblance to the modern part of Edinburgh, and is scarcely less beautiful. It lies in a vale, on both sides of a deep and sinuous river, and is shut in by hills of splendid proportions, whose slopes afford great variety in form and the colour of their vegetation. Old Bilbao teems with human life, and the new part spacious, formal, and stately, is also full of people. The air

reeks of trade. One feels that this is a money manufactory. Hundreds of mines are disgorging to maintain this city, and are doing so very well ; the general effect is strong and comforting. Press and get ahead, may not be the best of mottoes ; but here it is recognised, and as all strive to work, few are poor, and the result is an unusually robust, animate, and cheerful crowd.

Bilbao is un-Spanish in many ways. Life is an earnest affair. Attractive pieces of architecture abound, and the old streets, though straight, are full of character. The town appears always to be *en fête*, for every family's washing in all colours hangs from the windows perpetually. Children are in swarms, and very noisy and hardy. The boina of the Bilbaoans is tiny, sitting on the head like a languid apple-dumpling.

The following names appear in the order printed over the fish and fruit vendors' stalls in the open market of Bilbao. Could any other nation make such a display of beautiful names ?

Juana	Modesta	Josefa	Lucia	Cecelia
Dominga	Augustina	Narcissa	Antonia	Basilisa
Santa	Pascasia	Maria	Joaquina	Eusebia
Andressa	Eufemia	Rita	Victoria	Francisca
Victoriana	Cipriana	Benilda	Valeariana	Manuela
Elisa	Juliana	Ramona	Tomasa	Clotilda
	Romulada		Hermenegilda	

One night in Bilbao a woman entered a cheap eating-house and asked for pan y agua—a roll

and glass of water—price one halfpenny. I sat opposite, eating a tenpenny meal of four courses, with wine and a variety of fresh fruit. According to custom I smiled at the woman, as if she were my nearest friend, and placed my hands as if to say, "All this is spread for you." She replied by shrugging her shoulders, letting her head to one side, pouting her lips, and dropping the hand which held the bread so that she said, "Observe the contrast? Such is fate! I am poor, you are rich! God help me! Virgen Maria! Por Dios!" This caused me to reflect on some signs of the times and quaint humours of Spain.

Signs of the Times

Owing to the taxes imposed upon them, advertisement signs and announcements are scarce in Spain. Window displays also are taxed; in fact, goodness knows what is not! I was about to write that the Spanish Government taxes everything, excepting brains; but, well, enterprise is certainly taxed. One cannot strike out, and be in any sense independent, for the tax-collectors—always plural—insist on coming along and taxing so much of the cream of the profits that there is little reward for enterprise left. Two orphan girls had to withdraw a sign which contained the single word "peinadora" (hairdresser) in order to avoid a preposterous tax; and one of my landlords had his sign hung on a wall inside the passage, because it would be too costly to show it in the

street. I have walked through miles of streets, looking for a lodging-house, and must certainly have passed scores of them ; but not one showed a sign, for so sure as there is the slightest display that house is taxed to ruinous proportions. This taxing of enterprise and food-stuffs, and the farming of the taxes, is the most baneful factor in the everyday life of Spain. The whole system is based on an entirely false, immoral, and antiquated conception of social economics.

If taxing the townspeople drove them to be first-hand and more efficient producers, there might be some reason for this thoroughgoing bleeding of the taxpayers ; but it does not ; for no class of field produce escapes taxation, and all the land is taxed in ways too numerous to mention.

From three to five hundred men are employed in sitting round and levying taxes on a town of a hundred thousand souls ; and practically all the money collected is divided amongst the tax-gatherers, whose chief employment is to beget offspring, if anything more parasitic than themselves.

Of course, some folk must proclaim their existence and that of their wares ; but the signs are always small and briefly business-like. On one side of a huge portal giving access to a cheap eating-house, a tall, cadaverous creature was sketched on the whitewashed wall, and out of his mouth came the words : " I dine at one of the best cafés in Malaga and pay two pesetas for four plates ; look at me ! " On the other side of the

doorway was sketched a burly John Bull sort of figure doing his best to get his arms to touch around his enormous waistcoat, and laughing out : " Here ! One penny ! " This was no exaggeration. I have shared the penny meal of four courses—soup, fish, a bowl of salad and fresh fruit, with olives, bread, and crystal water.

In a café at Malaga was written in English on a card, " English black stout porter for sale," and I have known an inn named " The Widow." It may be doubted if one ever had more lovers. To catch English-speaking visitors in a northern town, the barber hangs out the word, " Hair-cutterie " ; and another barber has this sign, " Barberia of the two Angels, my wife and I " (their surname is Angel). Spanish barbers are still so old-fashioned as to pull teeth and use the lancet. Over a door in a southern village are the words, " Barber ; I draw blood."

Over railway ticket offices the word " Exploitation " is fixed, and though it means only ordinary business it seems not inappropriate, for they rarely charge the fare marked on the ticket—but generally more !

" El Frequentemente " is the sign of a wine-shop in Salamanca, where one day a knot of men were discussing the rare subject of women. A dry-looking chap said he thought bachelors knew most about women, and then, looking down his waistcoat, uttered reflectively, " Perhaps that is why they are bachelors ! "

The leading bull-fighters issue very elaborate sheet almanacks, with records of tables and performances from year to year. There is usually a full-length portrait of the hero in fighting fig, with emblems of the ring forming an illuminated border. Here are two samples :

" Lagartijo (the lizard), 1900–02. Fought in 276 plazas, averaging 3 bulls in each—828 in all."

" Moreno de Alcala, 1907–8, fought 40 corridas —engagements. Killing 120 bulls in the year— (Spain and Mexico)."

Sounds and Cries

Spanish cathedral and great church towers have from twelve to twenty bells hung at different heights and used for different ceremonies. The general clanging and tanging is " striking," but not charming. There is no set pealing, the boys who monopolise the towers do no more than make signals to each other.

Beautiful bells in Spain there must be, for many have been wrought with great care ; but hung, tongued, and struck as they are, no true voice escapes them capable of reaching the soul of man.

The knife-grinder and tinsmith announces his presence out of a Pan's pipe of five to seven reeds, at the same time beating out a quick step with a light hammer on the bottom of a pot, platter, or frying-pan. This he does with great dexterity, providing homely music. His pace is quicker than any other man in the street.

On the railways the guards blow little brass horns so tunefully that one longs to escape from the train and go a-hunting.

I have seen at least one stove-pipe hat in its proper place. At Velez a sailor's cabin had an old silk hat stuck on the roof to form the chimney—just as in the house of Wendy.

Spanish editors do not believe in anonymity. In Valladolid the entire front of a building— more than thirty feet—is taken up with "Andres Martin, Editor."

The "Heraldo de Madrid" had a notice: "Makowski, the actor most celebrated in Berlin, died *repentant* this morning."

On a boiling hot afternoon, at a bull-fight in Salamanca, some one dropped and broke a bottle, and a man sitting near said quietly, "Now we shall hear about the hot weather."

Another fellow in his enthusiasm threw his umbrella into the ring, and the handle came off! "Vaya!" said he, "I'm off, I can't stand this excitement"; and he went. He represented a common type of Spaniard who cannot experience the slightest loss without wishing to sulk and suffer alone.

In a cheap eating-house I took the only piece of chorizo from the small plate of meat. "Brute!" exclaimed the maid. "Why?" said I. "What's it there for?" "What for?" she shrieked. "It's to adorn the plate!" I knew this well enough, but hunger must be satisfied sometimes.

Here is a story characterising the condition of Spain and the Spanish manner of joking :

Devotee : " In five years I have made three pilgrimages to the shrine of Montserrat."

Beggar : " Vaya ! Nothing ! In three weeks I have made five pilgrimages to the monte de piete ! " (pawnshop).

In some provinces Spanish children are frank, animate, and ready-witted ; in others, shy, quiet, and dull. Some children were playing at school on the sands near Malaga. A little girl was asked, " What is an island ? " and she immediately answered, " A bump in the sea ! "

A little boy, asked by a grown friend, " Do you love me ? " sighed, " Sometimes, but not now ; I am fat with dinner ! "

The Basques do not provide one with much entertainment, but they teach some useful lessons. They are the Stoics of the Peninsula. All their movements and actions are very slow, yet they keep going and accomplish a good deal. They are hard to understand because so unlike other people ; their language, world, and its concerns are their own ; they say nothing about either, at least they do not brag to any foreigner. They are the people—the foreigner does not count ! Not that the Basque is uncouth, but he asks or implies, " Your business ? Any more ? Thank you ! Good day ! " I stewed him hard for some time, but he remained hard. There seems to be no way of making a Spaniard out of him ; and one

wonders what he may be instead. Many Basques do not know a word, excepting a garbled word of Castilian, and their own Basquenth seems to be formed for business and curt farewells. But one likes their brevity, if only that it proves they are not humbugs.

Most of the Basque provinces are truly beautiful, but often it is a profitless beauty. One may not easily see so much green which is not to be eaten or sent to market in some form, does not attract tourists, or delight sportsmen. The mountains, vales, and rivers are exquisite to the eye ; but they do little to sustain the body. At most they do not sustain many bodies. The wet winds of the Atlantic press almost continually, and promoting sour moss-like growths over much of the country, neither man nor beast can subsist on the natural vegetation. Trees of many kinds thrive, and one could not wish for a better wooded land, or greener, cooler, sweeter vales. Walnuts, chestnuts, and cobnuts are grown in great quantities, and then there are the Basque-nuts. I cannot explain further about the Basques, for they will not let me ! In one way I know them ; in another it would be presumption to admit as much. They are a very hardy, big, strong, determined, good-looking and quiet people, good to know and a misfortune to lose.

Arriving at San Sebastian, after nine months' wandering, I look back on many blessed days. I have lived to my soul's uplifting. I have increased

the length and the breadth of my life. I have had some real leisure, a feeling that I was beyond the reach of the world and might have it out with myself; size up the past; and decide on what should be retained. I have been imitating Spain, and restoring or rebuilding the edifice of my true self. I am fairer, and come again to have faith in work. I have gathered a store of useful materials; I have two willing hands and the world waits——

THE NORTHERN GATE

The Northern Gate swings wide at last!
  There glints the chaste Pyrenean snow;
Biscaya's tide is rising fast,
  And you and I must homeward go.

Blest, if this jaunt our hearts inspire
  To service for the sons of men;
With time beside life's evening fire
  To dream and live these days again.

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